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Gangsters' Whitehall link



How The Independent broke the story yesterday

Regime propped up with UK aid

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Whitehall gave diplomatic and trade aid to the "gangster state" of Albania as part of a policy that helped to prop up the criminal regime, it was alleged in the Commons yesterday.

Labour MPs have put down a Commons motion and questions suggesting that Foreign Office diplomatic bags may have been improperly used to send political material to Al-

Links between the crumbling regime, the Conservative Party and the Foreign Office have been drawn

bania, to possible violation of international conventions.

Links between the crumbling regime, the Conservative Party, the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister were drawn by Labour MP Dennis MacShane in a series of Commons questions, a motion and a speech that all carry privileged protection from libel action.

The Independent reported yesterday that Britain had helped the Albanian government in spite of intelligence warnings of complicity and involvement in drug-smuggling, gun-running, sanctions-busting and money-laundering.

But in the Commons yesterday, Rotherham MP Mr MacShane and 10 backbench colleagues used a motion to criticise "British diplomatic and trade support" for Shiponja - a company allegedly run by Al-

bania's ruling Democratic Party and involved in smuggling - and for the Vefa holding company, which ran one of the pyramid sales schemes and which also has links with the ruling party.

The motion also claimed that official British support for the regime "may have led to violations of the Vienna Convention on the use of diplomatic bags as well as complicity in arms dealing with Rwanda and Afghanistan."

In a separate question, Mr MacShane put down a written Commons question to the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, asking: "What representations he has received about the use of the diplomatic bag to convey party political propaganda?"

Independent expert examination was urged in the motion for "artefacts thought to be from the National History Museum of Tirana given as gifts to the Prime Minister and other ministers by [President] Sali Berisha in 1994."

Mr Berisha, who attended the Conservative Party conference in 1991, made a state visit to London in 1994, but Number 10 said last night that John Major had been given a "fake blunderbuss".

A Foreign Office spokeswoman said the then Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, was thought to have been given a "coffee set", which had since been disposed of, by an unknown Albanian minister in August 1992, but a full list of Albanian gifts for Foreign Office ministers could not be found yesterday.

In an impromptu Commons speech, during a debate on a Private Member's Bill - the Jurisdiction (Conspiracy and Incitement) Bill, which would allow prosecutions for crimes which are plotted in Britain but committed abroad - Mr MacShane said President Berisha was "the political godson of our own Prime Minister" and had



John Major meets the Albanian president, Sali Berisha, in March 1994

Photograph: UPPA

been at Tory conferences with Mr Major.

As for alleged Tory links with the Berisha regime, the motion condemned "the continuing political support from the Conservative Party and its former vice-chair, the Right Honourable Member for Chertsey and Walton" - Sir Geoffrey Pat- tie MP. Sir Geoffrey, a former minister who is non-executive chairman of GEC Marconi, was out of the country and un-

available for comment yesterday. The motion also urged "Westminster Conservative Association not to allow its address to be used by apologists for the Berisha regime". A recent letter to The Times, extolling the business opportunities in Albania, carried a Westminster address that coincides with the offices of the Cities of London and Westminster Conservative Association.

In yesterday's debate, Mr

MacShane said: "President Sali Berisha has appeared on Conservative Party conferences with the Prime Minister."

President Berisha's Democratic Party was widely regarded as "a gangster organisation", linked to arms dealing, drug dealing and smuggling historic artefacts from the national museums of Albania, said the Labour MP.

"This gangster state and President Sali Berisha have

very strong links with, and indeed have the patronage of, the Conservative Party," he added.

Mr MacShane said he hoped arms-to-Iraq inquiry chairman Sir Richard Scott would hold a public inquiry "into the behaviour of the gangster state of Albania and its political support in this country". Then it might be a question of prosecutions being made under powers in the Bill, he said.

Murky links, page 3

Compulsory car-free estates put motorists on road to nowhere

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Car-free estates, once a plank of communist social planning, are now seen as the last word in traffic solutions. Tenants of new housing estates in the central London borough of Camden will be banned from owning vehicles, if plans by councillors are approved later this year.

Under the council's scheme, new tenants would be prohibited from keeping a car within the borough boundaries as a condition of their tenancy agreement.

Similar plans are being touted in Europe to curb congestion. The largest car-free estate,

in Bremen, Germany, is nearing completion and its developers point out that the benefits include "better air quality, reduction of the noise level and more green space".

Under Camden's new rules, developers would be banned from including off-street parking in their plans. Residents would risk eviction if they owned a car while living in a car-free zone and new tenants would not be issued with parking permits.

The move, if implemented, is one of the most radical anti-congestion strategies in the country. The council is committed to reducing car journeys in the borough. When a local private

school asked to increase its school roll, the council demanded that the number of journeys made by parents in cars be cut by 30 per cent.

"It is an experimental, radical plan. We have one or two housing associations that have already expressed an interest in building car-free developments," said John Thane, chairman of the council's streets and transport committee. "Hardly anyone needs a car in the central areas because they have got so much public transport and can walk to so many places."

Motoring organisations gave the proposals a cautious welcome. "Many people want to

use their cars for shopping and visiting people at the weekend and they should be given some consideration," said Edmund King, a spokesman for the RAC.

The RAC points out that residents in Edinburgh have a scheme whereby they give up their cars and rent a council car instead when they require one.

Green campaigners said car free estates would become the norm "in the near future". "London is exactly the kind of place where these places would work. The city has a good public transport system and walking is always an option."

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Commentary, page 21

QUICKLY

Row over Lawrence
Lawyers accused The Daily Mail of setting a dangerous precedent by accusing five white youths of the murder of Stephen Lawrence after an inquest jury found the student was unlawfully killed in a racist attack. Pages 3 and 20

Major takes long view
John Major told a Welsh Conservative rally that Labour's proposals would result in a quagmire of constitutional change which threatened a thousand years of British history. Page 5

Banking on a bonus
The £2,500 staff at Lloyds TSB could pick up £2,500 each following the bank's record profits. Page 22

Testing the 3Rs
New primary school teachers will have to pass spelling, grammar and maths tests before starting work. Page 11

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هَذَا مِنْ أَلَصَل

news

significant shorts

Mayhew to consider new inquiry into Bloody Sunday

John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, and relatives of some of the victims of Bloody Sunday have presented what they say is striking new evidence about the tragedy to Northern Ireland Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew.

Mr Hume said after the 20-minute meeting with Sir Patrick that he hoped there would be a fresh inquiry into the 13 killings in Derry of 25 years ago. Sir Patrick had agreed to study the evidence, which included eyewitness testimony showing that the Army was shooting live ammunition into Derry's Bogside, post-mortem examination notes, recordings of Army radio messages and a copy of recent Channel 4 news reports.

"This was a very significant meeting. It was brief and to the point. We presented a substantial volume of material, which the families know very well is new evidence," Mr Hume said.

Nigeria in row over jailed Briton

A diplomatic row erupted last night after Nigeria failed to release a Briton held without charge in the African state for over six weeks.

The Foreign Office has confirmed that Bruce Henderson will not be released, despite assurances yesterday from the Nigerian government of no case against him. "We are extremely disappointed and have vigorously protested to the acting Nigerian High Commissioner in London," a spokesman said. No explanation has been given for the 42-year-old Scot's detention.

Firm wins £60m Nimrod deal

A £60m contract to build advanced flight simulators to train the crews of Britain's new Nimrod 2000 maritime patrol aircraft has been won by a West Sussex-based firm, it was announced yesterday.

The aircraft are to be built by British Aerospace for service early in the next century to hunt submarines and surface vessels and carry out search-and-rescue mercy missions at sea. The simulators from Thomson Training and Simulation of Crawley will be installed at RAF Kinloss in Scotland, between 2001 and 2004 to coincide with the arrival of the new Nimrods.

Greenpeace in solar 'raid' on DoE



The environmental protest group Greenpeace yesterday attached 20 square metres of solar panels to the Department of the Environment's new central London headquarters in a dawn raid yesterday. The move was intended to highlight how Government is failing to support non-polluting solar power, which Greenpeace wants to see taking over from fossil fuels. Greenpeace said it would give the £7,000 worth of panels to the Government free of charge, and also connect them up to the building's electricity supply at no cost. But the Environment Secretary, John Gummer (left), said his new headquarters already had many environment-friendly features, including a pollution and energy saving combined heat and power system. Solar panels had been rejected by the Department's experts, but his officials would now discuss with Greenpeace donating the electricity-generating panels to a housing charity. He congratulated the pressure group "for keeping these issues at the top of the agenda".

Nicholas Schoon

Boxing clever for birds

Nest boxes could soon be appearing on mobile telephone masts as ornithologists bid to boost Britain's dwindling bird population. Launching its first "National Nest Box Week", the British Trust for Ornithology wants businesses and schools – as well as housewives – to install places where birds can nest. It says modern farming and countryside management has left them with a serious shortage of natural holes to creep into. Trust director Jeremy Greenwood explained: "There are fewer hedgerows, trees are not allowed to get old and rot any more. If we don't find new holes for birds to nest in there will be many fewer of them – it's as simple as that. The answer is nest boxes."

The phone firm Cellnet is one of the companies that has agreed to help by putting boxes on transmission masts. British Sugar has also agreed to put boxes at its production sites.

British truckers caught in blockade

More than 100 British lorry drivers were still caught up in the increasingly-violent Spanish truckers' dispute last night.

One Scottish driver, a grandfather of seven, spoke yesterday of running battles between police and pickets and of how he had been threatened with violence if he attempted to move his lorry. "There have been a lot of clashes involving police and pickets over where I have been stopped," said lorry driver Norman MacDonald, 61, of Carnwath, near Lanark, who has been halted near Lerida in Spain. "I have been told that if I try to move, my windshield will be smashed. The Freight Transport Association has written to the Department of Transport urging officials to seek European Commission help to end the dispute."

Police install CCTV monitors

Surveillance cameras have been fitted in a police prisoner transport van for the first time and at a station as part of pilot scheme aimed at preventing violence and false allegations by suspects and officers. The closed-circuit television cameras have been installed at Brixton police station in south London, and the Metropolitan police are planning to extend the pilot later this year to three other divisions. Sixteen colour CCTV monitors will be fitted in the custody suite and station yard in Brixton, along with four microphones in the charge room area. The move follows recommendations made after the death in custody of Wayne Douglas in December 1995.

Jason Bennetto

Police chief in racism row

A police superintendent branded a racist by an industrial tribunal has been moved from personnel duties. Strathclyde Police said yesterday.

The force has also called in an assistant chief constable from Tyneside, James Mackinnon, to carry out an investigation of issues arising from the tribunal finding.

The move follows a ruling on Wednesday that PC Lawrence Ramadas, 32, from Troon, was discriminated against by Supt Gordon McPherson on the grounds of his race. The claim was denied by the superintendent who said he was "deeply, deeply offended" at any allegation that he had racist tendencies.

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On the scrapheap: A people robbed of their dignity while their leaders prosper

Details emerge of murky links between Britain and Albanian government

Andrew Gumbel

In the early summer of 1992, a meeting was held in the Dajti Hotel in Tirana that included a Foreign and Commonwealth Office employee visiting from London and a British adviser to the Albanian presidency called William Bennett. The man from the FCO came with a number of heavy cardboard packing cases sealed with plastic ribbon.

"These are the things you have been expecting," he told Mr Bennett. "Just make sure nobody knows where they came from."

The scene was witnessed by Alex Standish, a freelance business consultant and journalist. He watched one of the boxes being opened and saw that it was full of stickers advertising Albania's ruling Democratic Party. According to Mr Standish, the stickers had been produced in Britain for the local elections that took place in June 1992 and brought out under diplomatic cover.

That raises the possibility of two breaches of law. First, a violation of the Vienna Convention on the use of diplomatic bags, and secondly the illegal participation of foreigners in an Albanian election campaign.

The episode is one of several murky links between Britain and the government of Albania now emerging, following the collapse of several pyramid investment schemes believed to be connected to both organised crime rackets and the ruling order in Tirana. Mr Bennett, who now works as a barrister in London, was the first of two British nationals who gained unparalleled access as advisers to President Sali Berisha in the first two years of his tenure in office in 1992-93.

Both Mr Bennett and his successor Guy Roberts were promoted by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, a right-wing organisation active in emerging free societies that has close ties to the Conservative Party. At the time, Mr Bennett was the only foreigner allowed into the President's inner circle – an arrangement that was looked on with disapproval by a number of Western diplomatic missions.

Mr Bennett's position un-



Picking up the pieces: Albanians scramble for usable rubbish on a tip in Tirana as their country totters under political repression and violence Photograph: Bernard Bissot/Sygnia

described the cosy relations being developed directly between the Conservatives and the Democratic Party – relations that appear to have had a significant bearing on British policy as the Albanian government became more autocratic and corrupt over the following years.

Foreign Office officials subsequently posted to Tirana have – in common with their counterparts from other European Union countries – told visiting journalists until very recently that the country was progressing nicely on the path to democracy and a free-market economy, that the Democratic Party was popular, and that any corruption was merely a hiccup on the road to prosperity after half a century of brutal communist isolationism.

The fact that this line was peddled even by diplomats

known privately to have quite different views on the corrupt, criminal mess that Albania was turning into, suggests there was a specific policy to paint the Berisha government in the best possible light.

Foreign Office statements in the past year have protested at the more blatant violations of political and personal freedoms, and Britain has been less than forthcoming in its pro-government sympathies than some of its European partners, but the overall sense of sympathy for the Berisha regime has remained intact.

With Albania beset by street violence and political repression in the wake of the collapse of shady pyramid investment schemes, the policy followed by Britain and the rest of the EU has visibly crumbled. Yesterday, in response to *The Independent's*

assertions that the West largely ignored warnings of collusion between the Albanian government and organised crime, the Foreign Office appeared keen to be on the side of the angels. It said it "refuted the suggestion of unconditional support for the Albanian government" and acknowledged Tirana's "far from perfect record on democracy and human rights" – something its officials in the field have not chosen to dwell on.

Diplomatic sources have acknowledged a lack of political reporting from the Tirana embassy. British officials have asked questions recently about the status of the ambassador, Andrew Tesoriere, who has been in place for a year and is currently on an extended mid-tour leave of absence.

Opposition figures and intellectuals in Albania have

complained that the British mission has paid them and their views scant attention in recent months, preferring to keep close to the government and develop the potential for commercial opportunities first and foremost.

It is not clear if Mr Tesoriere's superiors have been dissatisfied with him, or if he has been doing their bidding all along but policy priorities are now undergoing rapid changes. Britain's mission in Albania is

tiny, especially by comparison with those of Italy and the United States, the two biggest foreign players whose own record has been far from unblemished.

Leading article, page 19

Daily Mail stands by Lawrence case charges

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

Leading lawyers accused a national newspaper of acting as judge and jury yesterday after it took the unprecedented step of calling five unconvicted men murderers and publishing their photographs.

In a front-page story the *Daily Mail* accused the five young men of killing Stephen Lawrence, the black student, and it challenged them to sue if they thought that the newspaper was wrong.

The allegation followed a verdict of "unlawful killing" by a coroner's jury that took the extraordinary step of adding that the murder of Lawrence, 18, who was stabbed to death at a bus stop in south-east London in 1993, was "a completely unprovoked racist attack by five white youths".

The five men who were accused by the *Mail*, David Norris, 20, brothers Neil Acourt, 21 and Jamie Acourt, 19, Gary Dobson, 21, and Luke Knight, 20, all from south-east London, have already faced a public and private criminal prosecution for the murder, but both cases collapsed. All five refused to give evidence at the coroner's court.

The police and legal system have come under attack for failing to convict Lawrence's killers.

Lawyers are angry at the *Daily Mail's* decision to accuse the men of murder, because they believe it is a dangerous precedent that will encourage "trial by newspapers", and because it makes a mockery of the legal system.

They also argued that because people taking libel cases are not entitled to legal aid, it would make it too expensive for most members of the public to try and challenge newspaper allegations of this type.



Headline news: The front page of yesterday's *Mail*, its editor Paul Dacre (below left) and Stephen Lawrence



Nigel Pascoe QC, chairman of the Bar Council's Public Affairs Committee, said: "What happened to Stephen Lawrence is a vile and wicked killing carried out by evil racists." But he added: "I believe this [allegation] is a watershed, from newspapers offering critical hard hitting comment to being occupiers, and judge and jury."



"sue us" – something most people cannot afford. It's a slippery slope and could lead to injustice." Conservative MP Roger Gale, chairman of the Conservative backbench Media Committee, told BBC Radio 4's *World at One*: "I think this is tabloid journalism at its worst because it's trial by newspaper." But on the same programme Peter Wright, the *Daily Mail's* deputy editor, denied the paper was acting like a "kangaroo

court" and said: "We have invited them to put up a defence. So far they have failed."

Lawyers representing the five white men named by the *Daily Mail* are believed to be considering legal action.

A solicitor representing one of the men said: "Anything's possible. If we decide to do it you will know about it."

A spokeswoman for the Attorney General said that the *Mail* had not committed a crime and that it was up to the five people who had been named to decide whether they want to pursue a libel case.

Lawyers for Lawrence's family are currently preparing to bring a civil action against the five men claiming damages, in an action similar to the one which was brought against OJ Simpson in the United States.

Over the last four years all five have at various times been charged with Lawrence's murder.

However, according to the Southwark coroner Sir Monague Levine, "a wall of silence and fear", preventing witnesses coming forward, hampered a successful prosecution.

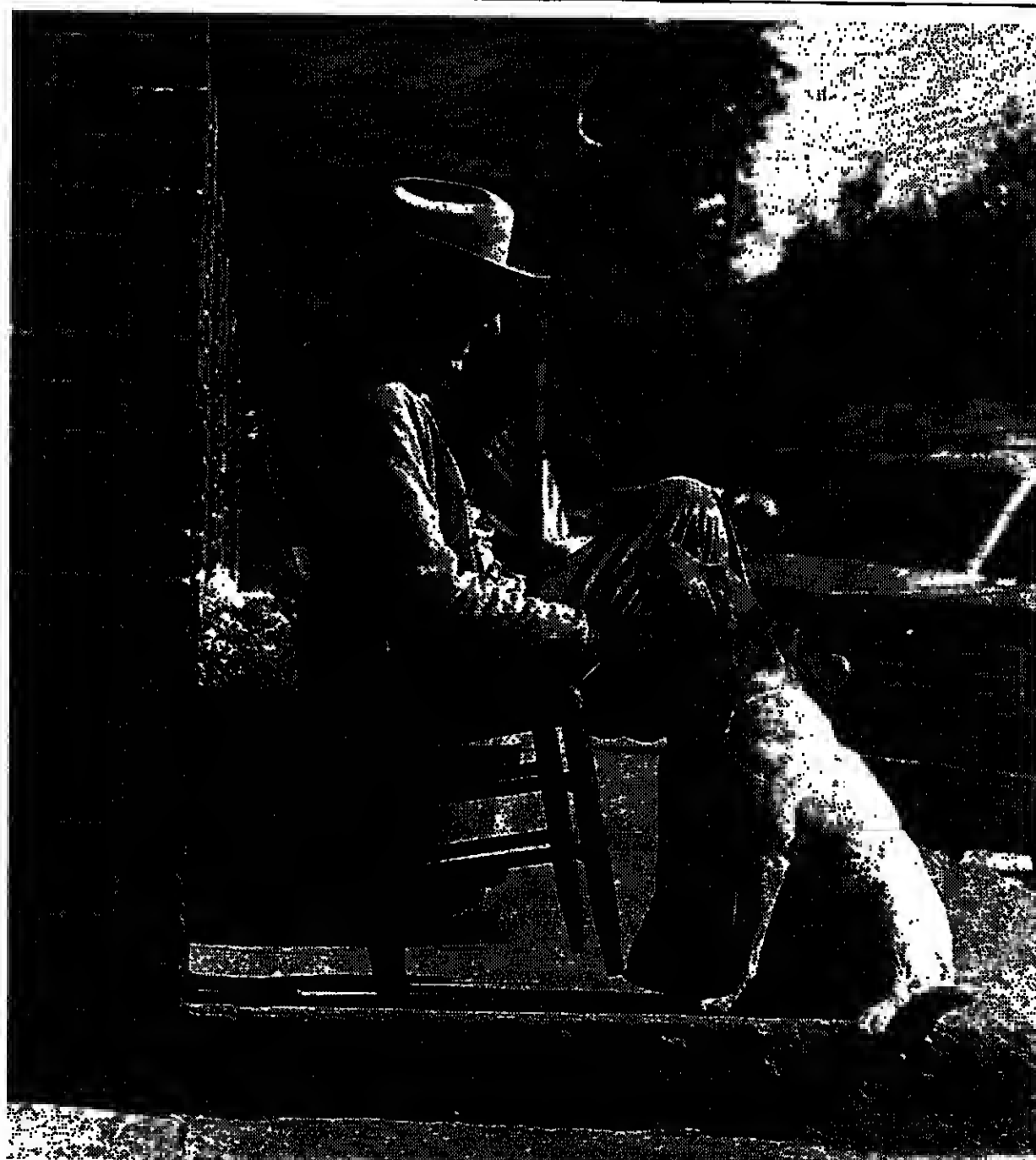
A case against two of the youths was abandoned by the Crown Prosecution Service in July 1993 when it ruled that there was insufficient evidence to secure convictions.

The CPS decision to drop that criminal prosecution prompted the Lawrence family to launch a rare private case against the five young men.

After the private prosecution was launched, two of the five were discharged by a magistrate at the committal hearing and never stood trial.

The remaining three were formally acquitted at the Old Bailey last April, after a judge ruled that evidence from a friend of Lawrence who witnessed the attack, was unsafe.

Saturday Story, page 20



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JACK DANIEL'S TENNESSEE WHISKEY

هكذا من الأصل

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. That was the motto of hundreds of lonely hearts who picked up at the New Century Night Room in central London, determined to obtain the new series of *Blind Date*.

St Valentine might be talented to deliver, but *Blind Date* was not so easy to get. After rummaging through unimpressive post bags, waiting an interminable slumpage of self-esteem and indulging in quick, inconsiderable glances, hard-hearted typists off-tackle the problem head-on.

The dating service operates 11am and no appointments needed. Eighteen-plus is the Single - big tick. Would you like to go on next series of *Blind Date* - why not. It was, effectively, a love affair. Pink letters for the girls, blue for the boys.

"*Blind Date* is not a dating agency," say the rules. "It's a serious attempt to match people." But for a while to go, flowers, not money. "I didn't get flowers, no nothing," bemoans one lattered heart. "Oh, I'm sure there's someone

هكذا من الواصل

Major launches crusade to save constitution

Anthony Bevens
Political Editor

Fear of the unknown, the risk of change, and the threat to a thousand years of British history were yesterday presented by John Major as Labour's stark alternative for voters.

The Prime Minister told a Welsh Conservative rally in Holywell, North Wales: "We either stick to the people and policies that are bringing success and progress, or we risk it."

In the next few weeks, Mr Major said, the country faced a choice in an election. "It can change direction, veer off into the unknown, import new ways, and take a hammer and chisel to our constitution."

"Or it can choose the tried and trusted path we are on - a path bringing prosperity for more people as day succeeds day. We offer progress, not reckless change." That message, he said, would ensure Conservative victory.

But with Mr Major gearing himself up for an inquisitorial role against Tony Blair in next Thursday's Commons debate on the constitution, Opposition leaders reacted scornfully to yesterday's speech.

Paddy Ashdown, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, said: "This is a desperate attempt by the Conservative Party to cling on to power by clinging to the past."

"Mr Major's extraordinary case seems to be that everything's fine, that there's nothing wrong with politics... The fact is that the British constitution is strong, and has lasted this thousand years, precisely because people in every age and



Old guard: Tory supporters at the Welsh Conservative Conference in Holywell, yesterday, at which Mr Major denounced Labour policy on the constitution Photograph: Rob Stratton

every generation have had to modernise it, put it back in contact with its people."

For Labour, John Prescott

said the Tories' only constitutional proposal was a defence of the power of hereditary peers to make law, something Labour would abolish.

"So while hereditary peers

are left, unaccountable to anyone, cut off from the interests of ordinary people, with their thousand-year-old powers, people in Wales and Scotland are to be deprived of a greater say in how their countries are to be run."

Portraying Labour as gloom-

ing, people who prayed for rain when the sun shone, Mr Major said that Britain had a smile on its face: it was the success story of Europe.

Repeating a refrain of his

speech, he said that it became more obvious "as day succeeds day" - yet another hint, or

less, that it remains in the Con-

servative interest to hold off the election until the latest available date: 1 May.

The Prime Minister said that

if the country stuck with the Tories, they could make Britain

training. The alternative was a Labour government that offered as a priority a return to the "quagmire" of constitutional change.

After 18 years of planning, in Opposition, Mr Major said that Labour policy was "peppered with so many holes that it makes a sieve look watertight", adding: "They still cannot answer the most basic questions about their priorities in government."

Mr Major then dug into the detail of the key questions he would be putting to Mr Blair in

"We can import new ways and veer off into the unknown, or choose the tried and trusted path we are on"

next week's Commons debate, and warned: "Labour would throw a bone to the yapping dogs of Welsh and Scottish separatism in the vain hope they might then follow Labour."

They would gerrymander Britain and play party politics with our nation for pure political advantage.

"A thousand days of Labour government could ditch a thousand years of British history. It's a poor bargain. Better to keep the history and ditch Labour."

A lesson in history for the Prime Minister

Louise Jury

Baffled academics yesterday questioned the Prime Minister's grasp of Britain's past after he suggested devolution would destroy "a thousand years of British history".

"It's a totally incomprehensible remark," said Dr Paul Addison of Edinburgh University yesterday.

Wales was united with England only in the 16th century and, for most of the 1,000 years, Scotland was an independent country and Scotland and England were fighting each other. "It's very hard to understand what he means, unless he means English history. Britain is less than 300 years old as a country, since the Act of Union in 1707."

Arguably the Tories had already come close to leaving British history behind when

they signed up to the Common Market, Dr Addison argued. "They put an end to it by abandoning most of British sovereignty."

Spending any time in Scotland made one immediately conscious of how ignorant English politicians could be. "But surely he can't be that ignorant? He'll just have to go back and sit his O-levels again," Dr Addison said.

Dr John Roberts, formerly the head of Merton College, Oxford, whose most recent work was *A History of Europe*, said the Prime Minister's comments did not square with the facts. "Even the conquest of Wales hadn't begun 1,000 years ago," he said.

And when it came to "playing party politics" with the nation, Dr Roberts said there was nothing new in that. The union between the separate nations of the United Kingdom had always

been a matter of expediency. "It has always been in response to emergencies that the whole thing was put together," he said.

The invoking of historical argument in politics was always alarming, he added. "I guess there are a lot of people in the Tory party who do have very crude views of British history, and they like this sort of thing."

Bernard Crick, professor of political theory and biographer of George Orwell, said it was an "idiotic" reading of events.

"It shows they don't know any real history. They haven't a clue about what has happened in Ireland or Scotland. It's conjuring with a popular and wholly English distortion of history."

Even since the Act of Union, Scotland had continued to have a different clerical, legal, educational and local government system, the professor said.



Love raffle: Lonely hearts complete Blind Date questionnaires Photograph: David Rose

Bold-hearted seek Cupid's arrow at a Blind Date

Clare Garner

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. That was the motto of hundreds of lonely hearts who pitched up at the New Connaught Rooms in central London yesterday to audition for the new series of *Blind Date*.

St Valentine might have failed to deliver, but Cilla's televised arrow was right on target. After rummaging through unpromising post bags, suffering an intermittent slump in self-esteem and indulging in a quick, inconsolable sob, the bold-hearted rooped off to tackle the problem head-on.

The dating doors opened at 11am and no appointment needed. Eighteen-plus - tick. Single - big tick. Would you like to go on next series of *Blind Date* - why not? It was, effectively, a love raffle. Pink tickets for the girls, blue for the boys.

"*Blind Date* is not a dating agency," say the rules. "It's not a serious attempt to match up couples with a view to marriage. But for some, it was quick, tidy work. 'I didn't get no flowers, no nothing,' bemoaned one tattered heart. 'Oh, I'm sure there's someone out

there," came the consoling reply from Norman. "When are we getting married, Tiger?" said the pouting 30-year-old, much made-over.

From the multiple applications of shimmering blue lipstick to the flashing how-ties and brand new Levis, the contestants were dressed to impress. A gaggle of girls with uniform blonde highlights mocked their elderly sisters who were seated at the front.

Looking for the world as if they were back in the hazy hall, the pensioners lined the front row. "First in the supermarket queue, first to the *Blind Date* audition," sniped one. "I don't think by that age I'd care what I did," another contributed.

Some filled in their questionnaire forms ferociously; others agonised for hours, as they say in the waiting room for love. Martin fell firmly into the first category. Do you smoke? "Yes. Loads of marijuana." Marital status? "Never." Done any modelling? "Yeah, lots of porn modelling." Do you have a party piece or special talent? "Don't ask."

Same-sex groups of eight were escorted to the next door

room at half-hourly intervals. In the spirit of the game, men select women and vice versa. "Why did we want to go on *Blind Date*?" asked a discerning Dave. "My boyfriend dumped me and I thought: 'I'm fed up with long relationships. I just want some fun,'" replied Mandy, 32.

"I was going out with this guy for seven years and he wouldn't marry me," explained Dawn, 30. "Waste of seven years if you ask me. I want three children and a big garden." And presumably a man.

The odds were stacked against them though. Only 150 of the 39,850 applicants who will be interviewed at locations across the country between now and May will qualify for the next series.

James took refuge in the rules. "Some of the dates are in the British Isles, so if you are only coming on the show in the hopes of winning a trip to an exotic location, you may very well be disappointed," he read with a satisfied smile on his face. "The 150 lucky ones who make it onto the next series will only go to Brighton or Bognor anyway," he rejoiced.

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هنا من الاما

"The tragedy of my work is that I could never save the people I photographed."

Don McCullin has been photographing wars and human rights disasters since 1964, when he took his camera to Cyprus, and the Congo. He has often risked his life to bring back pictures to show the world what was happening, pictures which he hoped might help to end the horrors he witnessed. In these pages, Amnesty International invites Don to talk about his work and what he thinks all of us can do to help.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON MCCULLIN



Amnesty International: working worldwide for the release of prisoners of conscience, fair trials for political prisoners and an end to torture, extra-judicial executions, "disappearances" and the death penalty.

The first time I saw a dead body was in Cyprus. Someone had shot this old man and his two sons. They were lying in a little house, warmed by the Mediterranean sun and when I opened the door, the sweet stench of fresh blood drenched my nostrils. In the next room there was a burning straw bed and the mixture of smoke and blood have stayed with me to this day. Often, if I get near a bonfire in the garden, I'm suddenly transported into a daylight dream of murder and death.

"The dead make their own statement."

I can see that scene now: the bodies on the floor, a woman standing there crying. It's her new husband she's looking at, they'd just got married. I'd let myself into that house quietly having knocked several times. I thought, my God, they're really going to punish me for intruding on this terrible scene but they didn't. They gave me a sign to stay and go ahead and record it, as if they wanted people to see. They wanted a voice. The dead make their statement and my picture records it. The dead don't choose to give their statement like that, but it's the only way left for them.

I wanted my pictures to bring messages from the dead and the near-dead in prisons and death camps, to the rest of us living. Saying 'For god's sake do something'. It's the same job Amnesty does. The world's in a worse state today than when I started taking pictures and Amnesty is the only answering service out there, picking up on those feeble cries for help.

"What's your name, soldier?"

When I take a picture I may be the eyes of the newspaper's readers, but I can't be their conscience. It's hard living with my own.

The picture on this page, I took in the Congo. My baptism was the wicked experience of seeing what was done to these young men by

mercenaries in Stanleyville, now Kisingani.

I'd disguised myself and flown up on a secret aeroplane which was bringing mercenaries in from Leopoldville, now Kinshasa. I got to the airfield at dawn. A tropical thunderstorm was just finishing, the ground was wet, it was warm and everyone was sleepy. There was a platoon of men standing in the dawn, and this Hercules revving up, waiting to go. A man came down the line with a clipboard and said, 'What's your name soldier?' I thought, I'm in trouble now. I said 'McCullin' and he said 'Not on the list? How do you spell it?' So I spelt it and he said, 'Right, climb on.' When we got to Stanleyville there was fighting going on. We drove from the airport past a lot of dead bodies to an old hotel by the river. There was terrific commotion, coming and going, distant explosions. After ten minutes a jeep screamed into the compound and said, 'Any guys just in from Leopoldville, get down to the docks, we've got problems, the C.O. wants you over the river.'

"They were dragging them by the penis."

I was carrying a little weeny camera bag with two cameras, twenty rolls of film and a meter. A mercenary came up and said 'Have you got a weapon?' I said 'No' and he said 'Well get one'. I ignored him because it was abhorrent to me to carry a weapon. I jumped on this truck with all the soldiers and got down to the docks. I was young, easily impressed and I hadn't declared myself. I kept my camera in my little bag, but my eyes were wide open to all that was going on around me.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw a huddled bunch of human beings, all bleeding and shaking. It was a most distressing scene. A mercenary said, 'Haw, you should have been up here ten minutes ago, they were dragging them around behind trucks by their penises.' He told me 'That lot are for the chop. They'll shoot them and kick them in the river' And I was in shock because it doesn't matter how tough you think you are, there's no kind of preparation that can get you ready for such sorrowful things.

"It's appalling to witness a murder."

To witness people about to be killed is appalling because you see them looking at you, pleading with their eyes. They sense your pity, their eyes get bigger, appealing to you to help, to get them out of this terrifying plight and of course there is absolutely nothing you can do.

You lose something of yourself when you witness people die. You walk away injured. There's a danger, since people have had so much realism from certain disgusting Hollywood directors that reportage pictures will be looked at as art. I've never considered my work art, I have watched too many people die. I've seen people murdered in front of me and I've seen public executions. You can never learn how to behave under those circumstances, because there's no way to behave, other than be outraged.

"The last air in his body was calling for God."

The old, famous cheery question is 'Do you ever help anybody?' The tragedy of my work, of thirty years photographing wars and human rights disasters is that I could never save the people I photographed.

I often wept secretly, when no-one could see. Once in Beirut I saw two men standing in a stair well with their hands up, while their families were being dragged down stairs. The families were looking at the men as they came

"I've never considered my work art, I have watched too many people die."

down. I went with the families and came back just in time to see these two men being shot in cold blood at point blank range. I can never forget that one of them had an Astrakhan hat on and a kind of light raincoat, and that the other was saying Allah as he was dropping. It was as if the last air in his body was calling for God. I went into the stairwell and gripped the wall and said to myself, take a hold of yourself, because this is only the beginning of... of what's going to happen here today.

"They were celebrating the death of a girl."

There was a day in Beirut when they killed several hundred Palestinians. I saw some of them die, but there was no way the camera was going up to my eye because a gunman came up and said 'If you take pictures you'll be killed yourself - I suggest you leave this area.' As I left, I heard the sound of a lute being played. They were celebrating the death of a Palestinian girl about twenty years old lying in the winter mud and rain of the street. I thought my God, if I take this picture it could cost me my life. I looked over my shoulder very quickly

and furtively and thought I can't walk past this. So I whipped that camera to my eye and took one frame and hurried away and as I went I heard somebody pleading behind me, and gun fire and I turned to see an old man falling, he was shot in the stomach at point blank range. I thought I must get out of here. You walk away from those situations and thank God you're alive, and feel guilty because somebody else paid the price for this mayhem. Next day I went back and there were mounds of corpses.

"When you think you're going to be killed..."

It's eerie, walking round a city where human life and human rights mean nothing. You walk round several corners and it looks normal, and then you walk round a corner and the most extraordinary things are going on - you see men being herded to their deaths. I went up to this man, a gunman from East Beirut with whom I'd spent the previous day, and I said 'What's going on with these men?' He said 'They're going to get the chop' and I said 'No, please don't do this. The press are here, everyone can see what you're doing, this is wrong, please don't do this'. He said 'Listen my friend, go away, it is none of your business' and they took these men into the yard but I pushed my way in behind them. It had been raining and this old factory yard was all wet and damp under a weird sky. I saw one of the Palestinians looking at a gunman loading a fresh magazine into his rifle. I've often tried to transplant myself into that man's position. The shock of fear that goes through you when you think that you're going to be killed is just...unthinkable. It's unthinkable. I know that from Uganda when I thought I was going to get murdered in the Makindi prison. I know what that poor man felt like seconds before he was put to death.

"I thought my God, this is the end of my life."

In Uganda, I was arrested. They came to my room and made me pack my bags. I was dragged out and chucked into a jeep and driven to the Kampala police station, which was chock-a-block with people and two or three other journalists. About seven, when the day was beginning to fade, a man in a check jacket walked into the police station - he must have been a plain clothes security man. He asked the sergeant, 'Who are these people?' And the sergeant said 'They are journalists.' He said, 'Journalists? They are dirty people.' I was sort of sniggering. But a few minutes later we were pushed and punched outside and squeezed into an army jeep. It sped out of the police compound up the hill and I thought 'They're going the wrong way, the airport's the other way'. They took us to the military prison at Makindi where a bunch of soldiers were drinking beer. They all grabbed sticks and rushed up shouting 'Get out of the car, get out of the car.' We were made to sit on the floor cross legged, heads bowed and they started kicking us. Luckily they had rubber combat boots so we didn't get any broken ribs but they were whacking us with their sticks. Then they took us down into the courtyard, well inside the prison. They stood us against the wall and that's when I thought 'My God this is it, you know, 'the end of my bloody life'. My mouth was as if someone had emptied a tube of superglue in it because nothing dehydrates you quicker than fear. It completely locks your jaw.

"I lay on this mattress covered in blood."

But they took us down to some cells. We were there four days. There was a man lying on the bed. He looked in a bad way. Another man told us 'Take no notice of him, he's for the chop. He's a Tanzanian cop they caught at the border.' I heard the rattle of keys and marching feet and I ran and hid in this cell which had no lights. I heard them beating him. It went on and on and I heard the pleas and the screams and the thudding blows. Then they left. The



Below:
The Congo, 1964.

A young man is tormented and humiliated by soldiers before being shot and his body thrown into the river.

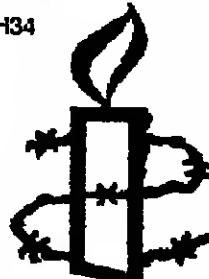
Minutes before this picture was taken, this man and others had been dragged behind trucks by ropes tied to their penises.



*Left:
A Palestinian family is
busted out of their home by
gunmen belonging to the
Christian Phalange. In the
aftermath, the men of the
family are held at gunpoint
with their hands up.*

Right
Moments after the first picture was taken, I reached back only to see the two men shot dead at point-blank range. One of them, as he fell, was saying "Allah, Allah, Allah" as if the last breath in his body was calling for God.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



All at sea: the case against polluters of the Welsh coastline

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

Friends of the Earth yesterday vowed to prosecute those to blame for the *Sea Empress* oil disaster if the Government's Environment Agency fails to.

The environmental group is convinced there is enough evidence to launch a criminal prosecution for the pollution caused after the tanker ran aground at the entrance to Milford Haven harbour a year ago today.

But it is not yet sure who to prosecute; yesterday its campaigns director Tony Juniper said the Department of Transport, the Milford Haven Port Authority and the tanker's managers, Acomarit UK, were all possible candidates.

Leigh Day & Co, lawyers for Friends of the Earth, have written to the Environment Agency to say that unless it initiates a criminal prosecution by 15 April the group will launch a private one.

The letter complains that the agency, which has strong powers to prosecute water polluters, has had nearly a year to consider prosecuting - but has still not yet decided whether to do so. The agency confirmed yesterday that its own investigations are continuing.

"What's going on?" asked Mr Juniper. "It's clear that this disaster was avoidable. If justice is to be done, then we must have proper enforcement of environmental law."

Yesterday Friends reinforced its point by dumping several pails of *Sea Empress* oil on the steps of the Department of Transport in Marsham Street, central London. The pollution can still be found from time to time on Pembrokeshire beaches because it is lifted out of remote coves or off the seabed during storms and at high tides.

The fully laden tanker struck rocks then lost a small quantity of its cargo of North Sea crude as it entered Milford Haven in south-west Wales, on 15 February last year.

But over 70,000 tonnes, much more than half its cargo, was lost during the many attempts to salvage the ship over the next week. Tugs failed to hold the tanker in place as strong tidal currents dragged it over the rocks, hoisting it again and again.

Eventually it was refloated and brought into port. The ship

has now been repaired and is going back into service. But Pembrokeshire suffered Britain's most damaging oil spill since the *Torrey Canyon* struck rocks off Cornwall 30 years ago.

The Government's official accident investigation report will not be published for about another month. This has examined the initial grounding and the salvage operation carried out jointly between the Coastguard Agency's Marine Pollution Control Unit and the port authority, and widely regarded as having been bungled.

The Marine Conservation Society said that despite the recommendations of the *Brer* inquiry by Lord Donaldson, there was still no permanent fleet of salvage tugs stationed around the UK to be called on in tanker emergencies. The DoT maintains three very powerful "supertugs" - one near Dover, Kent, one off the West Country and one near the Hebrides - in the winter only.

Environmental groups and local people were furious that there was no public inquiry into the disaster, even though it happened just three years after Britain's previous big oil spill. In 1993 the tanker *Brer* lost all power, struck the Shetland Isles and split all its cargo. Far less damage was caused along the Shetland coast than in Pembrokeshire because raging storms dispersed the oil.

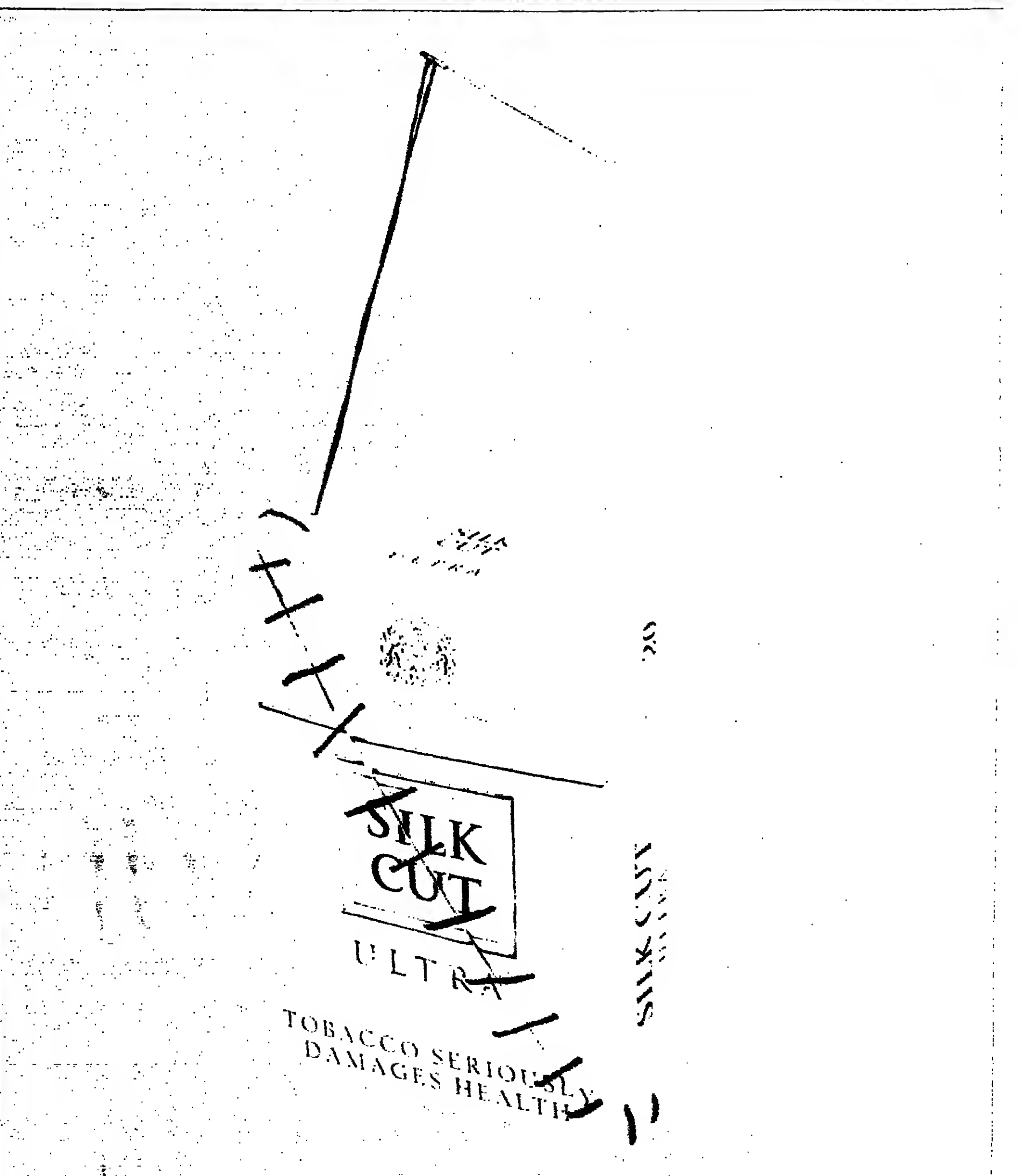
But the *Sea Empress* oil washed onto 120 miles of cliff and beach, much of it in Britain's only maritime national park. Five thousand sea birds were known to have been killed, but many more died because the bodies of most oiled seabirds never reach the shore.

There was a ban on all fishing in surrounding waters, but that has been progressively lifted. The harvesting of shellfish is still not allowed from between the low and high tide marks and a couple of small sea areas. Nor can edible seaweeds and samphire be harvested.

Nearly £2m is being spent on around 100 scientific studies into the impacts of the spill, most of which are not yet complete. It is known that there was massive short term damage to wildlife and the breeding of some seabirds was set back. Fortunately the long term damage appears, so far, to be minor.



Dirty fight: Friends of the Earth protesting outside the Department of Transport yesterday (main picture) about the damage from the *Sea Empress* disaster (above), which killed at least 5,000 birds (below). Photographs: Adrian Dennis/PA



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news

AAAS conference: Help for problems in families and medicine

The secret of domestic bliss is all in the genes

Reports by Charles Arthur Seattle

Violence and conflict in modern families with stepchildren or step-parents is partly due to ancient genetic programming which tells us to take more care of close relatives than strangers, say scientists.

While there is no "gene for caring", many species take more care of their immediate children because they have more of the same genes than strangers – including unrelated children. But that is causing problems in the modern age, said Stephen Emilen, professor of biology at Cornell University, New York, at the American Association for the Advancement of Science conference yesterday.

Professor Emilen said: "The nuclear family is becoming less common, replaced by growing

numbers of single-parent and stepparent families, and at the same time we are seeing an increase in child abuse, delinquency and truancy."

But he said that by making people more aware of this predisposition – through education programmes similar to those about genetic disease – such problems could be lessened, or averted. "Be aware that if you are in a stepfamily, or dealing with one, there is a statistically greater chance of problems," he warned.

He also suggested involving grandparents in child-rearing, especially for single-parent families, and suggested that tax incentives might induce people to take part.

Studies of more than 300 bird species and 80 kinds of mammals, including humans, have shown that parents and grandparents

tend to help their children, effectively protecting the genes that they have passed on to them.

But though this worked well for humans ever since the hunter-gatherers on the African plains 4 million years ago until the middle of the 20th century, that has recently begun to break down, said Professor Emilen.

"All else being equal, the closer the kinship, the greater the tendency for animals to co-operate," he noted. But he found in a survey of social scientists' reports that there was a correlation between the structure of the family and children's well-being.

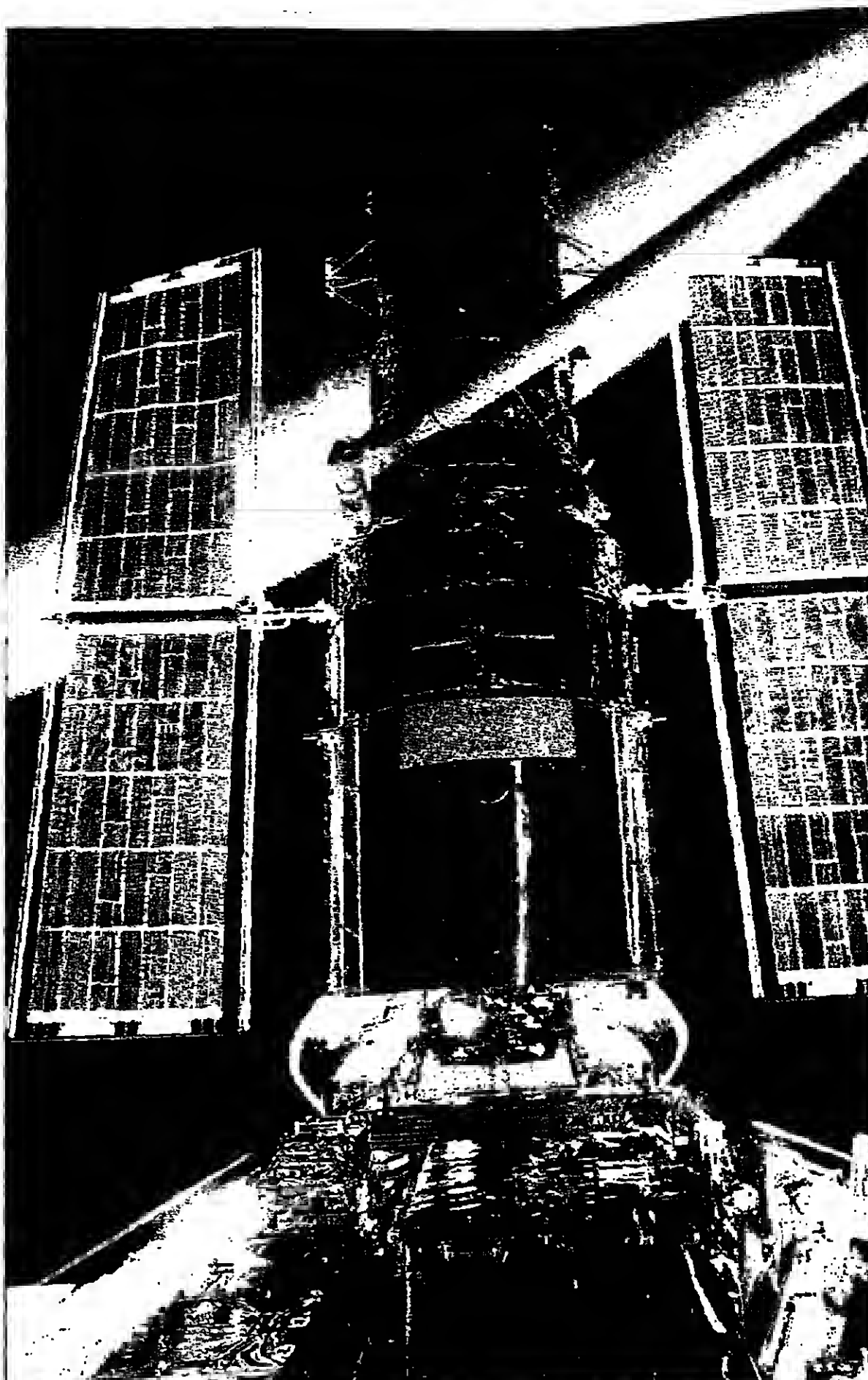
He found that stepchildren are more often physically or sexually abused, or killed, than children in intact families. Stepparents spend less time and effort with their partner's previous children than with their own,

and are far more likely to commit sexual abuse: the incidence of sexual abuse of stepdaughters in one study was eight times greater than for biological daughters.

Also, children in stepfamilies leave home earlier than children in intact families, while the marriage itself tended to be less stable too: divorce in American families was more common in second marriages, and that frequency grows with the number of stepchildren.

Professor Emilen commented: "The rules we evolved with don't work well in the greater diversity of family types present today."

"We didn't ask for these biological predispositions; they came as part of a bigger genetic package that worked just fine for our ancestors for thousands of years."



Gotcha: A 50ft arm from the space shuttle Discovery captures the orbiting Hubble space telescope, successfully completing the first stage of its mission to install two state-of-the-art instruments that will allow astronomers to see deeper into space. Photograph: Reuters (courtesy NASA)

Hormone clue to mystery of Aids

What happens if you put male mice in a cage with female mice? If you are researchers into HIV, the virus that causes Aids, then you come up with clues to a potential treatment for the infection. And, bizarre though it might sound, it also involves pregnant women.

According to Robert Gallo, one of the world's leading Aids researchers, the clues to the new treatment came about by accident – "or, as my colleague said, good observation of an inadvertent experience".

In an experiment in which mice were injected with malignant cells from Kaposi's sarcoma, a skin cancer common in Aids patients, a researcher accidentally put male and female mice in a cage together. Subsequently, he found that female mice which were in the early stages of pregnancy when they were inoculated with the malignant cells did not develop tumours.

Dr Gallo, director of the Institute of Human Virology, said that his team – which had carried out the Kaposi's experiment – then tried to find a hormone

produced in women at the same stage of pregnancy, and discovered one which kills malignant Kaposi's cells without affecting pregnancy or being toxic, yet also promotes bone-marrow growth. It also has an antiviral effect, killing virus cells, which would make it effective against HIV.

The hormone, human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), has now been used effectively in trials as a skin treatment against Kaposi's sarcoma. But Dr Gallo told the American Association yesterday that his team is still unsure exactly how the hormone works, though they are closing in on the precise part of the protein that performs the functions.

He was also downbeat about the progress of research into cures and treatments for Aids and HIV, saying that any sort of vaccine could be years away.

And he warned that recent progress with mixtures of drugs, called protease inhibitors, and the discovery of people who appear to be naturally resistant to HIV infection, was not a definite indication that we are at the "beginning of the end" of Aids.

Pseudo-healers prey on hopeless

American scientists furiously denounced the multi-billion pound "alternative medicine" industry yesterday, describing it as "quackery" that diverts people from the truth while preying on their need to believe in a personal healer.

The growth of alternative therapies, worth \$14bn (£8.8bn) in the US alone, belies the fact that many treatments have been scientifically discredited, said Barry Beyerstein, of Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia. But, he said, "a fertile climate for quackery has been created by the low level of scientific literacy among the population, and vigorous marketing of extravagant claims by so-called healers, which appeal to wishful thinking."

Sometimes, alternative practitioners twist the reporting of scientific tests which have carried out on their therapies in order to give a distorted picture of their effectiveness, said Saul Green, of Zol Consultants in New York.

"After 15 years of studying and searching, I have not found one 'alternative' treatment for cancer that I could endorse," said the former cancer researcher. "I re-

alised that the proponents of these therapies depended on the fact that patients were deeply impressed with the printed word ... Advertising, not medical science, was the life-blood of these dubious methods."

He contrasted the situation today with that in 1903 and 1938, when investigative journalism exposed the frauds being carried out by the patent medicine industry.

Robert Park, of the department of physics at the University of Maryland, said that "many of the claims made for alternative therapies violate basic laws of physics. Homeopathy relies on a 'serious misunderstanding' of chaos theory, while the suggestions of 'biofields' which extend beyond the body have no basis in physics."

Ursula Goodenough, professor of biology at Washington University, said: "The problem is not the nice person in the health store who believes what's being sold is healthy. Rather, it's the industry built on pseudo-science that preys on hopeless people. It fills me with moral outrage. Scientists carry an obligation to protest [against] abuses of scientific knowledge."

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Trainee teachers to face tests in the three Rs

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

New primary school teachers will have to pass spelling, grammar and maths tests before being let loose in the classroom, under plans to be announced next week.

A new national curriculum for primary teacher training will require student teachers to prove their competence in the basics of English and maths, as well as demonstrating that they can control classes and keep lessons interesting.

The curriculum, details of which leaked out ahead of schedule yesterday, disrupting a planned series of pre-election announcements, specifies for the first time what aspiring teachers should learn. It replaces less prescriptive government-set criteria.

Gilliam Shephard, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, launched outline plans for the largest ever shake-up of teacher training last September amid growing concern that newly qualified teachers were entering the classroom lacking vital teaching skills.

She called for a curriculum specifying an essential core of what must be taught to trainee teachers, including knowledge of their specialist subject, what their pupils should be taught, effective teaching and assessment methods and the standards of achievement they should expect from pupils.

Under the new curriculum, trainees will be expected to demonstrate understanding of English language basics, including spelling and punctuation. They will also have to show that they have mastered structure, word derivations and the sound system underlying speech.

Trainees must learn how to get pupils to sound out words and write sounds, as letters, and to be articulate and coherent in expressing meaning. Students must also be able to teach standard English.

In maths, students will learn how to teach mental arithmetic, and how to spot common mistakes. They will also be required to develop a specialist subject to A-level standard.

The curriculum will include firm guidance on teaching

methods. It will require trainees to prove ability in "interactive" whole-class teaching - the method used in Pacific Rim countries which have a strong track record on basic skills.

The Department for Education and Employment and the Teacher Training Agency, which developed the curriculum, refused to comment on the content until the official announcement.

The Labour Party claimed that Mrs Shephard had hung on the coat-tails of its education spokesman, David Blunkett, who called last year for teachers to be given more training in how to teach effectively, including whole-class teaching.

The party said it would go further than the Government and consider reintroducing the probationary year for new teachers immediately after completing their training, allowing them to consolidate skills and ensure they had chosen the right career.

Mr Blunkett also hit out at the Government for "taking 18 years to reform teacher training".



Shipspace: Pupils of the Admiral Lord Nelson school in Portsmouth re-enacting the Battle of Cape of St Vincent at the Historic Dockyard. The battle, 200 years ago yesterday, helped Nelson seal his reputation for daring deeds as the Spanish fleet was destroyed. Photograph: John Voss

Labour spoiler on child crime

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Labour's home affairs spokesman, Jack Straw, yesterday upstaged a long-awaited government discussion paper on child crime due out next week.

The Home Office policy proposals will "examine what more can be done to identify children at risk of offending".

But Mr Straw stole a march on the Government yesterday, expanding on previous pledges to tackle youth crime, and committed Labour to making "our streets and communities safe and secure".

He said, in a speech in his Blackburn constituency: "For too long, the problems caused by disorder and anti-social behaviour have been placed low down the political agenda by central government. This attitude must change. Disorder and low-level offending have a profound effect on people's quality of life. It is time to act."

In addition to Labour's manifesto commitments to halve the time from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders, and

to get 250,000 under-25s off benefit and into work - "an anti-crime policy as well as an economic policy" - Mr Straw proposed an eight-point action plan to tackle bad behaviour by the young.

The package included child protection area orders, to deal with under-10s out, unsupervised, late at night; a replacement of repeat cautioning by a final warning system; parental responsibility orders, to make parents face up to the responsibility of their children's conduct; and a new duty to make local authorities work in partnership with the police to reduce crime.

Mr Straw said: "We have to develop local responses to the problems that most concern our communities. The precise problems and the responses will vary across the country, but the approach will be the same."

"What are people most concerned about, and how can these problems best be tackled, using the resources of the police, the local authority, and all the other key players in the local community?"

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THE INDEPENDENT
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international

Germans taste the trauma of the dole

Imre Karacs looks at the results of a collapsing economic miracle

Duisburg — Dieter Held did not pay much attention to the man with the clipboard who kept coming around to the workshop, watching, never asking a question, yet taking copious notes. Two weeks ago the visitor's purpose was revealed. He was a member of a team of management consultants hired to root out inefficiency, and the fruit of their labour was a report 2,200 names long, headed "surplus to requirements". Dieter, a fitter aged 30, found his name on the list.

"It felt like a roof collapsing over your head," he said. Dieter had been unemployed before, but had learnt his new trade during a previous recession and was confident he could ride out the next one.

Now he is not so sure. He has fired off some 40 job applications, but all he has had back are straight rejections. He is now widening the search beyond Duisburg, a city of half a million where one in five is out of work, but employers in the neighbouring towns do not even bother to reply. Duisburg has the highest jobless rate for a big city in western Germany, but the situation in the rest of the Ruhr is only marginally better, and what vacancies exist tend to be in fast food restaurants. The steel industry, where Dieter used to earn his daily bread, is down-sizing everywhere.

While he is idle, the state will pay him about DM2,500 (£915) a month — 63 per cent of his last take-home pay. After a year, the dole falls to 53 per cent, and after two years he will only be entitled to supplementary benefit. "Money will be tight," he says, but that's not what worries him most.

No society holds the unemployed in high esteem, but German society is especially harsh in its judgement. "When you lose your job, friends tend to take a step back," Dieter said. "No one wants to hang out with a loser." Dieter will only confess to his friends if he has not found work by the end of March.

He will then disappear, following millions of others who have already shut themselves away to hide their shame. "They become anonymous," said Gisela Averkamp, who runs a charity which helps people on the dole. "Most stay at home and watch television all day. It is unbelievably difficult to persuade them to come to the unemployment centre."

The unemployed vanish from their favourite pubs, sever trade union links

and disenfranchise themselves from public life. The gradual decline in voter turnout matches the rising rate of joblessness. Behind those closed shutters there is seething resentment, but it is yet to be articulated. Demonstrations, such as the 60-mile-long human chain formed in the Ruhr yesterday in protest against unemployment, are staged and manned mostly by union members desperate to avoid the fate of their ostracised former workmates.

The state, paranoid about provoking the unemployed, goes out of its way to keep them sweet. The jobless are summoned by courteous civil servants every three months for an interview, but are otherwise left alone. There are no queues at the labour bureaux, and the cheques arrive regularly without fuss. Because working Germans contribute to a state-run insurance scheme, the dole is a pay-related entitlement irrespective of personal savings and the earnings of family members. The jobless are even allowed to earn DM580 (£214) a month in part-time work.

Thus does the Federal Republic preserve social peace at a time of Weimerian unemployment levels. There are no stone-throwing youths lurking in Duisburg's neatly kept parks, no graffiti defacing public buildings on its litter-free streets. Factories that fall empty are rapidly converted into concert halls and theme parks. School-leavers, potentially the most explosive segment of the emerging under-class, are kept off the streets by a wide range of interminable retraining schemes. There are an estimated 2.5 million Germans on various projects who are not counted as unemployed.

What trade they should be taught is not clear, however. Ms Averkamp, whose centre provides courses for the young, says she tries to steer the new generation of Duisburgers away from metal-bashing towards the gardening domain. There are still jobs to be had in health care and in retail, and management consultancy is booming.

Where a school-leaver's certificate might have sufficed a few years ago, employers now demand more impressive bits of paper — which often count for more in Germany than experience — even for the most menial jobs. Those who cannot keep up face the prospect of permanent unemployment.



Boom over: Coal miners and teenagers lighting torches at an anti-unemployment demonstration in Lünen, near Dortmund, yesterday

Photograph: Reuters

Regional unemployment rates



Unemployment stalks the land

Imre Karacs

It has been a good week on the Frankfurt stock exchange. Investors, cheered by news from the job market and the corresponding plunge in the Deutschmark, poured their money into German companies, matching the post-war record in unemployment with an all-time high for the Dax shares index.

One of the star performers in Frankfurt's bull run was Siemens, a large exporter of German electrical goods and jobs, which announced a leap in profits. Siemens sacked 6,000 workers last year, but wants to raise its return on investments to American levels by the year 2000. To get nearer that goal, the company will fire another 6,000 of its employees by the end of the year.

This is not how things are supposed to be done in Germany, the home of "Rhenish capitalism" which puts the workers' interests first, the boss'

second and shareholders' last. The model gave the world the economic miracle and almost unparalleled prosperity, built on harmonious labour relations, a cartel-like economy of cross-ownership, and consensus politics.

The system suited everybody for five decades, but it no longer suits the money-men. An increasing number of German companies, their managers bewitched by Anglo-Saxon phrases, such as "shareholder value" and "globalisation", are forsaking the German model.

The malaise of down-sizing is spreading from the north, cutting across the Ruhr, and its effects can even be felt in the land of the "sunrise industries" in the south. Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, where the unemployed might have been heading a few years ago on their bikes, both have a higher jobless rate now than Britain.

As for the East, the trillion Deutschmarks invested since

unification has failed to create more jobs than Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic achieved without the help of German tax-payers.

There are, of course, many affluent oases on this bleak landscape. Parts of eastern Germany now boast the most modern production methods in the world, which in years to come will pay rich dividends. The chemical sector in the West is booming, there are jobs galore in biotechnology and computing, and car manufacturers are conquering new markets and biding their own at home.

But those that remain successful have done so by shedding labour, often in the teeth of resistance from unions and politicians. Volkswagen started from scratch in eastern Germany, negotiating wages and work practices that would not be accepted by western unions. Daimler-Benz, the country's largest industrial concern, has sacked tens of thousands of

workers on its way towards renewed profitability.

White collar unemployment is still rare, but it is coming. Jobs in the public sector which used to enjoy civil-servant status are increasingly being offered on a contractual basis. There are openings in the service sector. New hotels in eastern Germany are seeking receptionists. Economists and long-suffering consumers agree that there is scope for improvement. There must be thousands of unemployed hairdressers, yet you cannot get a haircut in most of Germany on Mondays.

Will customer-friendly hairdressers save Germany from ever-higher levels of unemployment? Some experts doubt it. "The trouble is that jobs are simply disappearing faster than they are being created in services," says Peter Frieberg of Duisburg's labour exchange. But at least there are bound to be new opportunities in the leisure industry.

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سكزا من الامم

French make busiest piste a private function

An eerie silence has fallen upon our apartment building, and the streets outside. The lift, previously as elusive as a waiter in a crowded café, remains obediently where you leave it for as much as 30 minutes at a time.

There are parking spaces on the street; there are empty lunch tables in restaurants as late as 12.45pm. The extremely noisy family in the flat below no longer complains to the *gardienne* about the noise made by our children running on the parquet floor.

It is, in short, the official Parisian two-week winter holiday. Not quite *le tout Paris*, but a sizable part of it, has departed to the slopes, or to their second residence, or to their in-laws "in the provinces".

The great summer escape from the capital is well known. It is a mark of shame for a Parisian of any means or social standing to be found in Paris in August, when the city is invaded by foreign tourists. The *vacances d'hiver*, starting only four weeks after the Christmas-New Year holidays finish, are not so rigorously observed but they are another of those mass events the French love, and love to complain about.

Peasant farmers in the Ardèche and the unemployed in the Pas de Calais will not be taking their skis to the Alps, or going to their *residences secondaires*. But, like it or not, their children are off school for two weeks and in some cases, receiving free, or cheap, ski holidays, subsidised by the state.

The school calendar for the entire country is designed, it seems, to suit the regimented social life cycle of the French bourgeoisie. But the school calendar, fixed nationally three years in advance, then becomes a kind of tyranny, which makes life even more regimented than is comfortable, or even tolerable. The whole situation is rather *typiquement français*: logical planning to solve one problem causes a much worse problem.

The fashionable time to go skiing is in February because the French will not ski anywhere but in France and the best French skiing is reckoned to be in February. Since five weeks paid hol-

PARIS DAYS

iday is now the legal norm in France (more than any country except Germany), a two-week winter, or ski, break has been built into the school year.

Only a small minority of the French go skiing – just over 8 per cent. But since they all go at once, this means 5 million pairs of skis hit the slopes at the same. This makes for very crowded slopes.

Even if they do not go skiing, many other French people, almost one in three, go on holiday at this time, because the

“A penchant for formation living is matched by an extreme attachment to privacy”

schools are closed. Very few (about 5 per cent) venture outside France. Mostly, they go to second homes or to relatives and friends in the country.

More than any other European country, the French spend all their holidays at home. This is a symptom of French insularity, if you like. But France is also the most popular holiday destination in the world. If this country, which has mountains, sunshine, good food, history, culture and unspoiled countryside, is popular with foreigners, why should it not also be popular with the French?

Benedicte, who lives two floors below us and is the only neighbour to have befriended us, cheerfully sums up her existence: “Paris is for school. As soon as there is no school we go into the provinces.” Whenever her husband can, he goes too. Otherwise, every weekend and school-holiday, Benedicte packs up the car and the children and sets off to her mother-in-law's house in the Auvergne.

The French penchant for formation living is matched by an extreme attachment to privacy. Package tours are unpopular. At holiday time, they go off *en masse* to live very private lives.

The Ministry of Education decided three years ago that the timing of the winter holidays was causing a problem. The departure of tens of thousands of families to the slopes, or the countryside, when tens of thousands of others were making their normal weekend pilgrimages, was causing vast traffic jams on the autoroutes out of Paris and on the narrow roads leading to the best ski resorts.

Hence, a Cartesian solution was devised: start the school holidays on a Wednesday and end them on a Wednesday, to avoid big jams at the weekends. This year school in Paris ended at Wednesday lunchtime on 5 February and resumes next Wednesday morning on 19 February. Unfortunately, it occurred to no one that few parents would be allowed to start their holidays from work on a Wednesday. Also, no steps were taken to persuade the ski resorts to shift from the Saturday-to-Saturday pattern of letting everything from skis to boots to chalets. As a result, many people have been forced to squish two-week ski holidays into one, making the slopes even more crowded and threatening almighty jams on the roads today and tomorrow. Instead of next weekend. The ski resorts complain they are losing business.

Today has been declared a “*samedi rouge*” by Bison Futé, the absurd cartoon Native American who is the symbol of road safety in France. It will be, in other words, a day of vast jams and maximum aggravation. The noisy people in the flat below (who have never spoken to us but always complain through the *gardienne*) will be in a rare old mood when they get home. It may be a good time to book home clog-dancing courses for the children.

John Lichfield

Mayor in fraud probe

John Lichfield
Paris

The Mayor of Paris, a close ally of both the French President and Prime Minister, is under investigation for embezzlement of public funds three years ago, according to the magazine *Le Point*.

Jean Tiberi – whose wife is already being investigated by magistrates for the same affair – will receive a letter placing him under formal examination in the next few days, according to the magazine. The mayor, who was deputy mayor under Jacques Chirac at the time of the alleged wrongdoing, rejected *Le Point*'s account yesterday as “the propagation of false information”.

He said he would take legal action against the magazine.

His wife, Xavière, is accused of having received 200,000 francs (£32,000) in a sweetheart deal with a local council in the Paris region in 1994. Mrs Tiberi received the money for drawing up an allegedly pointless report on links between French local government and former French colonies in Africa.

According to the satirical and investigative weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*, the report was mostly plagiarised by a researcher from published sources and was, in any case, of no practical use to the department of the Essonne.

Le Point reports in its edition published today that the two

magistrates examining the payments have discovered that the money was placed in a bank account held jointly in the names of both Mr and Mrs Tiberi.

Last December the chairman of the Essonne council, Xavier Dugoin, directly implicated Mr Tiberi in the affair. He said he was seeking access to the “network of contacts” of the then Number Two in the Paris town hall. He had several conversations with Mr Tiberi in which it was agreed how he would engage the services of Mrs Tiberi and how she would be paid.

The affair is potentially seriously damaging for President Jacques Chirac and the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé.



It's snow good: The French ski in February, because they will not ski anywhere but in France and believe the snow is best in February
Photograph: Peter Macdarmid

significant shorts

UN staff accused of child abuse in Angola

Angola's Justice Minister, Paulo Tjipilica accused United Nations personnel and foreign aid workers in Angola of sexually exploiting children. "Aside from Angolan citizens there are foreigners involved, some who work for Unavem (UN Angola Verification Mission) and others who work with aid groups." A UN spokesman said a committee had been set up to investigate the allegations. **Reuter - Luanda**

Under-age labour offside

Sporting goods companies including Nike and Reebok are joining a campaign to halt football production by Pakistani children. As many as 10,000 children under 14 spend 10 hours a day stitching the balls for a pittance. Last summer the US government began a campaign to discourage Americans from buying child-made balls. **AP - New York**

37,000 mercy killings

An estimated 37,000 euthanasia deaths occur each year in Australia as a result of doctors intentionally accelerating a patient's death, according to a survey of 3,000 doctors. Euthanasia is illegal in Australia except in the outback Northern Territory which introduced the world's first voluntary euthanasia law last September. Three people have used the law, which the Australian parliament threatens to overturn. **Reuter - Sydney**

Scientists sue Kohl

Three Scientists have taken Chancellor Helmut Kohl's party to court for expelling them as members. A civil lawsuit filed in Bonn accuses Christian Democratic Union of violating national laws and international conventions on human and political rights. The CDU ousted the three in December because they are Scientologists. **AP - Bonn**

Sharif named as PM

The Pakistan Muslim League (PML), which won general elections on 3 February, named its leader, Nawaz Sharif, as prime minister. A meeting of the parliamentary group of the PML and its allies unanimously elected Mr Sharif as their parliamentary leader. He will be formally elected prime minister on Monday. **Reuter - Islamabad**

Uighur plea for help

Uighur organisations appealed to the UN and Central Asian leaders for help stopping what they called China's armed suppression of their people. China admitted clashes last week between Uighurs and ethnic Chinese in Yining left 10 people dead. But Kakhbarman Khozhamberdi, leader of the United Association of Uighurs, said the death-toll was between 80 and 90 people. **AP - Almaty**

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international

Martin Luther King's family demand trial

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

After almost three decades of silence, the family of Martin Luther King is reopening one of the most traumatic events in modern American history, by demanding a full-scale trial of the man who was convicted of the 1968 murder of the leader of the United States' civil rights movement.

Flanked by his mother, Coretta Scott King, Dexter King told a press conference in his father's home town of Atlanta that the family would make a formal petition next week for a court trial of James Earl Ray, who is dying of liver disease in a Tennessee prison hospital. "It's now or never," Dexter King said. "Only a duly conducted trial can shed light on my father's assassination."

In many respects, the King case resembles the controversy which still surrounds the assassination of President Kennedy, that other national tragedy of the Sixties. As with Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas, forensic evidence is overwhelming that

Ray fired the single rifle shot which killed Dr King on a motel balcony in Memphis, Tennessee.

But, exactly as with JFK, conspiracy theories rage. In part, these reflect a similar refusal to

Ray is dying of liver disease. It's now or never. Only a full trial can shed light on my father's assassination



James Earl Ray: Dying of cirrhosis in prison

admit that a random act by one obscure individual acting alone could change history. But doubts of the official version of events are reinforced by the known obsession of the then director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation,

J Edgar Hoover, with Dr King and the supposed threat he represented to US social stability. In short, was Ray given a helping hand from above?

After the murder on 4 April, as protest rioting swept the

avoid the death penalty, he pleaded guilty and was given a 99-year jail sentence. But hardly had he been sentenced than Ray recanted his confession and demanded a proper trial.

Even though a congressional committee in 1979 found the "likelihood but no proof" of a conspiracy, Ray's request has seven times been turned down, and prosecutors insist that no new facts justify a reopening of the case. But his illness (he has acute liver cirrhosis and without a transplant is given less than a year to live) and the intervention of the King family may tip the scales.

Ray himself, now 63, insists that he did not commit the crime, and his lawyers claim technology developed since his 1969 conviction could show that his 30-calibre hunting rifle was not the murder weapon. But the biggest mystery is how Ray, a small-time burglar on the run at the time of the assassination, obtained the money, air tickets and four fake identities which helped him evade capture for two months.

"The FBI kept my father under closer surveillance than any man in history, even more than Al Capone. There were 5,000 men on him," Dexter King claims. "How was a man with only an eighth-grade education, who was an escapee from prison with very little

money, able to get a passport and travel to three countries?"

A trial, he acknowledges, might not completely clear up the mystery, but it would give the family "peace of mind". The truth had to be established, and "we feel strongly this can only be done in a court of law".

Among the most common theories is that Ray was set up by the Mafia, acting on behalf of the FBI or the CIA, and that he handed his gun to a man who said he was part of a gun-running scheme. The aim of the alleged plot was to prevent Dr King leading a planned march on Washington that, the authorities feared, could spark a national black uprising. In fact, his assassination led to the worst race riots in the city's history.

Ray has frequently changed his story of his actions in the 24 hours up to the assassination. But it is known that he bought the rifle in March 1968, and had followed Dr King to at least two cities before he arrived in Memphis to rally striking refuse workers. He died on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, which has since been turned into America's first civil rights museum.

Yesterday Ray's family also supported a trial. "I'm sure the whole King family like the rest of the American public, wants the truth to come out, once and for all," his brother Jerry Ray said.



Demand for justice: Dexter King, son of assassinated civil rights leader Martin Luther King (picture in background), at a press conference on Thursday. Photograph: AP

Bosnian town left in tense limbo

Tony Barber
Europe Editor

The north Bosnian town of Brcko, a focus of tension among Serbs, Muslims and Croats, will be placed under international supervision for a year pending a decision on its status, a US arbiter said yesterday. "We will make a final choice no later than March 1998," Roberts Owen told reporters in Rome.

Tension remained too high for Brcko to be awarded to the Bosnian Serbs, the Muslim-Croat federation, or the joint government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which all three nationalities are represented. "We are not convinced that any of the three candidates are sufficiently stabilised to take on the situation."

The ruling lessened the danger of an

immediate crisis over Brcko, but illustrated the bitterness and suspicion that fester in Bosnia more than a year after the Dayton peace deal was signed. Brcko was the focus of such a fierce contest for control at the Dayton talks that the issue was left unresolved and turned over to an arbitration panel.

Muslim and Croat leaders said it should be awarded to their federation, which occupies 51 per cent of Bosnia, because it had a Muslim and Croat majority before the Serbs seized it in May 1992. The Bosnian Serbs insisted on keeping control because Brcko provides a land link between the two halves of Republika Srpska, the Serb entity occupying 49 per cent of Bosnia.

Some Western officials feared the issue could ultimately cause the entire

Dayton peace structure to collapse. When rumours circulated in Sarajevo that Mr Owen intended to award Brcko to the Serbs, the Bosnian Muslim leader, Alija Izetbegovic, threatened to pull out of the three-nation collective Bosnian presidency. "I think that there is no one who could explain to the Bosnian people that it should calmly endure this final injustice," Mr Izetbegovic wrote in a letter to the major world powers. He said political chaos would break out if Brcko were left in Serb hands, because no Muslim politician would agree to serve on the collective presidency.

No less single-minded, the Bosnian Serbs see control of Brcko as an essential guarantee of their republic's survival. They have threatened to go back to war if the Muslims and Croats are awarded

the town. Mr Owen said one possible solution was to turn the town into a special district of Bosnia, with a status similar to that of Washington DC in the United States.

However, Brcko is not the only dispute still simmering in Bosnia almost five years after the war broke out.

The southern town of Mostar, split into Croat and Muslim sectors, has in the past week experienced its worst violence since the war ended in November 1995.

The presence of Nato troops is perhaps the main reason why war has not returned to Bosnia, but they are due to leave by mid-1998.

The United States welcomed the mediator's decision to defer the final decision on the status of Brcko.

Clinton fears war in Mid-East

Patrick Cockburn
Jerusalem

Worried that Israel and Syria are sliding towards a war in Lebanon, President Clinton is trying to get the two countries to resume the peace talks broken off a year ago. After talks with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, in Washington, Mr Clinton said he felt encouraged, but an Israeli official said yesterday that there had been no breakthrough.

The guerrilla war by Hizbollah, the Lebanese Islamic movement, against Israeli forces occupying a nine-mile wide zone in south Lebanon is unlikely to end so long as Israel holds the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria in 1967, Israel believes. Officials say that President Hafez al-Assad of Syria sees the fighting in Lebanon as an important way of putting pressure on Israel over the Golan.

Mr Netanyahu is quoted in the Israeli press as telling Mr Clinton: "You must make it clear to Assad that he must think of other options - the option of a total withdrawal from the Golan does not exist from our point of view."

Zeev Schiff, an Israeli military commentator, says the US does not want to start talks which would get nowhere. He adds that this is "despite the American belief that in the absence of a peace process, the sides will slide downwards towards war."

Attacks by the Israeli force in Lebanon earlier this week were directed at positions in the Bekaa valley, which is under Syrian control, in order to demonstrate Israeli military superiority in the wake of a series of successful guerrilla attacks and the helicopter accident which killed 73 Israeli troops.

The US opposes a unilateral Israeli pull-out. President Clinton said: "It is crucial Israel protect the security of its northern border. A further impediment to talks with Syria is that President Assad is seriously ill, a US official said.

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The presence of Nato troops is perhaps the main reason why war has returned to Bosnia, but they are due to leave by mid-1998.

The United States welcomed the mediator's decision to defer the final decision on the status of Brcko.

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Clever boxing by Russia's champion of democracy

Moscow — Grigory Yavlinsky used to be a boxer, but these days he likes to win his bouts with a rhetorical upper-cut, culled from the pages of 20th-century history. "The successful reform of Germany and Japan after the war was prepared by completely changing the political elite. In Russia, that did not happen."

Doubt has long been raised about the policies of the autocratically inclined President Boris Yeltsin, the magnates who underpin his rule and the former apparatchiks who crowd the corridors of government.

Many are assumed in the West to be reformers and democrats, despite evidence that their priorities have less to do with ideology than a desire to retain power.

But Mr Yavlinsky, head of Russia's Yabloko (Apple) party, has impeccable credentials, being leader of what he describes as "a real, federal de-

Phil Reeves meets the combative Grigory Yavlinsky

mocratic party of European values, of human values, of human rights, of competition, private property and the open market." That makes him relatively rare in Moscow: a largely pro-Western liberal ideologue. With Mr Yeltsin's second term in intensive care, Mr Yavlinsky has also emerged as one of his most caustic opponents, matching and often outsparring the Communist-nationalist opposition which dominates parliament.

Russia is in the grips of a "semi-criminal oligarchy" which has sprung from and coalesced around the remnants of the Soviet system, he told the *Independent*. The media is tamed; even the opposition is something of a sham. "The government is working hand-in-hand with the Communists and the nationalists ... They are the

main forces which are supporting the government."

The timing of such attacks is no coincidence. Like everyone else, the 44-year-old economist senses Russia is preparing for the possibility of a future with a new president, amid a mood that dusk has set on the Yeltsin era. Last week he was on the offensive again, writing in the *Financial Times*: "The ruling elite is neither democratic nor Communist, neither conservative nor liberal, neither red nor green. It is merely greedy and rapacious."

Given such failings, the leadership is, he warns, unable to cope with new menaces to Russia and the West: loss of control over nuclear weapons, development of a breeding-ground for terrorism and crime, and the "high probability" of an environmental disaster.

He told the *Independent*: "A very small number of people have benefited from what happened in the last five years, maybe a million out of 155 million. That million is really rich. But all the others ... got no access to resources, access to property, freedom to set up their own business."

Mr Yavlinsky wants Mr Yeltsin's successor to be subject to more checks and balances; there should be no more massive tax breaks issued with a stroke of the pen, no more secret decrees. "We need a system where it would not be possible for the president to have a morning cup of tea, and then to start a war."

Should an election be called, Mr Yavlinsky would run, although he is overshadowed by the front-runners, notably the nationalist-leaning Alexander

Lebed and Yuri Luzhkov, Mayor of Moscow.

Yabloko enjoys strong support among the urban educated but Mr Yavlinsky's 10 million supporters are too few to put him high in the field. He could wrinkle a promise of a top position by offering an alliance with whatever candidate the ruling establishment fields under the tattered banner of democracy and reform. But he prefers to remain aloof, an uncompromising democratic voice.

"If we went to the oligarchy, they (the voters) would say 'you are the same. You are only looking for your own'. The people would be disappointed. We have to show that there can be a clean democracy, with clean hands." Fine words. But in a country angered and humiliated by Nato expansion, the loss of the Chechen war, and botched economic reforms, the outlook for liberal ideologies is not great.



Lone voice: Grigory Yavlinsky, who says Russia is in the grips of a 'semi-criminal oligarchy' which has sprung from the remnants of the Soviet system. Photograph: AP

Yeltsin rejects move to rewrite constitution

Phil Reeves
Moscow

In his first radio address to the nation since being stricken with double pneumonia early last month, Boris Yeltsin yesterday tried to stifle rising demands for immediate constitutional amendments spawned by the uncertainty over his long-term future in the Kremlin.

Speaking for six minutes in a clear but slightly croaky voice, the embattled President sought to remind both his friends and foes that although he may be down — he has been off sick for most of the last seven months — he is not yet out.

Significantly, though, he did not dismiss the possibility of eventual changes to Russia's 1993 constitution, in which he secured sweeping powers, saying only that they must follow a "natural process" and not be rushed.

Alarmed by the prospect that he may be too unwell to rule for much longer, Moscow's political establishment has been embroiled in a debate about altering the constitution, partly to ensure that Russia's fate no longer rests so heavily in the hands of one man, and partly to block the favourite for the presidency, Alexander Lebed.

Suggestions have included considerably extending the time that the Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, can stand in

when the President is ill, a move that would delay the date of an election.

There have also been rumblings about, allowing parliament to appoint the next president, a move that would radically alter the nature of Russia's political system. Both plays would severely damage Mr Lebed's prospects.

Yesterday Mr Yeltsin sought to dampen down what has become a heated issue. "The constitution is the pivot of the new Russian statehood," he said.

"It is premature today to subject the new structure of the Russian state, as it is being built, to a test of its durability. It is more than that — it is foolhardy."

His broadcast came as he secured a small victory — the failure of a symbolic and lacklustre attempt in the Russian parliament's lower house, the Duma, to secure a motion calling on him to step down because of ill health. A truer measure of the President's fitness lies in the days ahead.

Mr Yeltsin's calendar for next week includes a meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright.

After that loom even more daunting tests of his strength on which all eyes will rest — a speech to parliament on 6 March, and a summit with President Bill Clinton in Helsinki on 20-21 March.

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in the grips of a semi-crisis of the Soviet system. Photographs

in rejects to rewrite institution

when the President is a move that would delay the of an election.

There have also been blings about allowing the president to appoint the vice president, a move that would radically alter the nature of Russia's political system. Mr. Lebed's prospects.

Yesterday Mr. Yeltsin to dampen down what had come a heated issue. "The institution is the pivot of the Russian statehood," he said. "It is premature today to subject the new structure of the Russian state, as it is being to a test of its durability. I am sure that it is not."

His broadcast came as a cure of a symbolic and badly attempt in the Russian parliament's lower house, the Duma, to secure a motion calling him to step down because of health. A truer measure of President's fitness lies in days ahead.

Mr. Yeltsin's calendar next week includes a meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. After then, he has a number of visits to the Duma, including a meeting with the Duma's speaker, Viktor Iashin, on March 20-21.

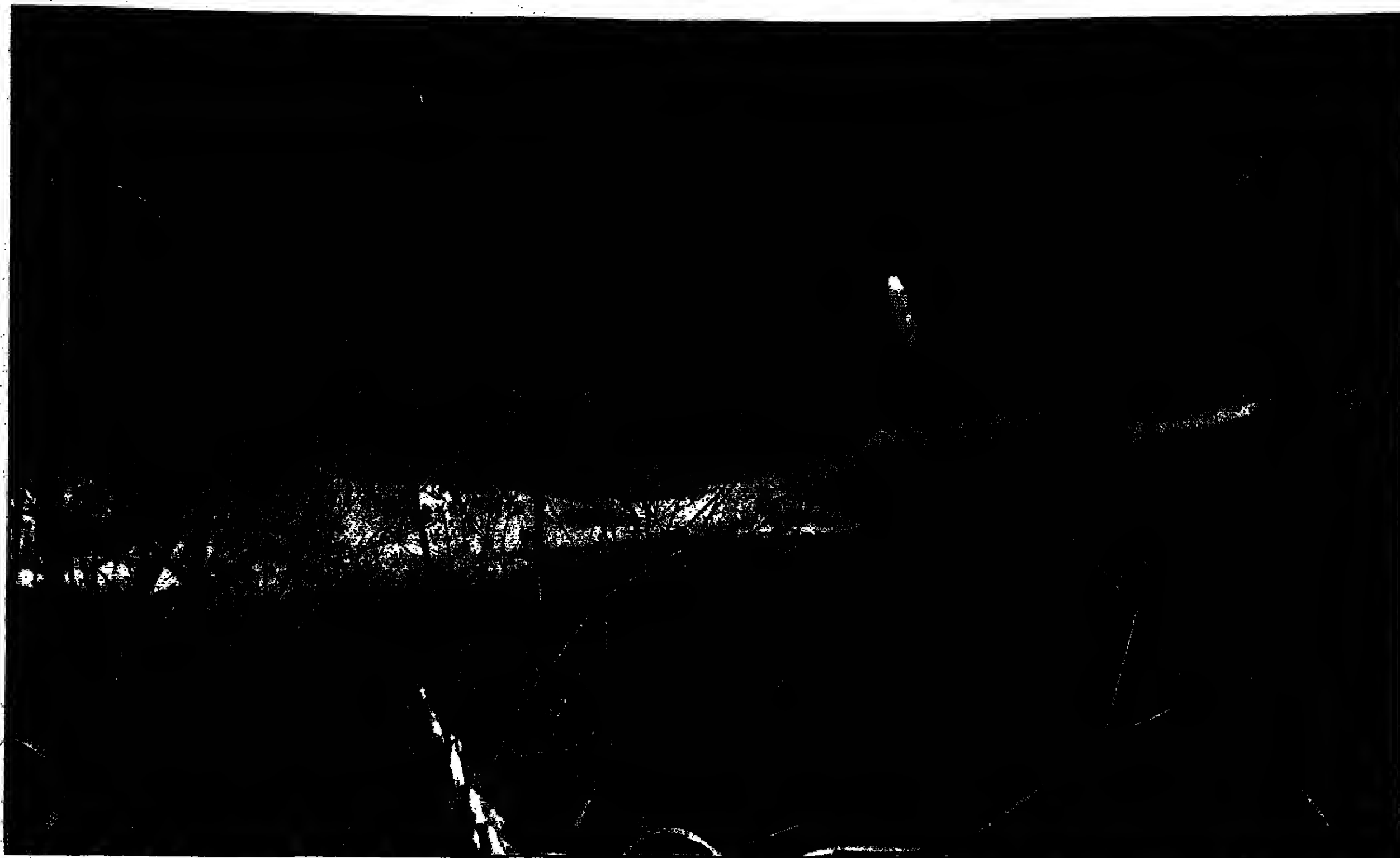


IMAGE OF THE WEEK MPs took a breather from the pre-election squalls this week with the 10th annual exhibition of the Parliamentary Photographic Group sponsored by Kodak. Labour's Ann Taylor found inspiration from the countryside near Holmfirth, Yorkshire, with 'Storm Brewing'. Picture taken with a Canon IXUS Advanced Photosystem camera, using Kodak Advantix 200 ASA film set on automatic, but using fill in flash

the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 15 FEBRUARY 1997

WORDS OF THE WEEK

My very dear Sam

As I have here two or three little matters in your note of yesterday which rather puzzled me, I thought I must write and ask an explanation. In the first place, in what does Bella sometimes now pain Sam just a little?

Why does he not wish to be near her? Secondly, what right has he to conjure up in his fertile imagination any such nasty things as rough corners to smooth down, when there is one who loves him better and more fondly than ever one behind did another on this earth at least. Oh Sam I think it is so wrong of you to fancy such dreadful things.

I must certainly say I have always looked up to, and respected, both parents and perhaps have been too mindful of what they say (I mean respecting certain matters), but then in a very short time you will have the entire management of me and I can assure you that you will find in me a most docile and yielding pupil. Pray don't imagine when I am yours - that things will continue the same as they are now. God forbid. Better would it be to put an end to this matter altogether if we thought there was the slightest probability of that, so pray don't tremble for our future happiness. I could not sleep without writing you, so you must excuse this nonsense. Good night, my precious pet, may angels guard and watch over you and give you pleasant dreams, not drab colours and accept the fondest and most sincere love of,

Your devoted,
BELLA MAYSON
Burn this as soon as perused.

Epsom May 26th '56

My dearly beloved Sam

I take advantage of this after dinner opportunity to enjoy myself and have a small chat with you on paper although I have really nothing to say, and looking at it in a mercenary point of view my letter will not be worth the postage. I am so continually thinking of you that it seems to do me

Epsom June 1st '56

My very dear Sam,

I have just returned from Brighton and hasten to write you a few lines just to give you a short account of my trip to Brighton.

In the first place I was very much disappointed at your not coming on Saturday evening. I waited and looked out anxiously for you but no Sam did I see to gladden my eyes. Naughty and very cruel of you to serve me so to serve me so, as Polly Hopkins says. We arrived about noon at Brighton and



Sotheby's, the London auction house, is to hold a sale of the love letters between 20-year-old Isabella Mayson, later known as the Victorian cook Mrs Beeton, left, and her beau, Samuel. The correspondence was written before their marriage in 1856

a vast amount of good even to do a little black and white business, knowing very well that a few lines of nonsense are always acceptable to a certain mutable gentleman be they ever so short or stupid.

Accept my best love and think of me only as, Yours affectionately, lovingly and truly
BELLA MAYSON

I am looking forward with great pleasure to that evening at the Opera, that is to say if we go by ourselves; rather a bold expression for a maiden of twenty.

1000000 kisses. Good bye, my darling.

Epsom June 16th 1856

My very dear Sam,

I have just returned from Brighton and hasten to write you a few lines just to give you a short account of my trip to Brighton.

In the first place I was very much disappointed at your not coming on Saturday evening. I waited and looked out anxiously for you but no Sam did I see to gladden my eyes. Naughty and very cruel of you to serve me so to serve me so, as Polly Hopkins says. We arrived about noon at Brighton and

immediately went shopping for the small children to appear at our wedding in something more than usual.

We shall not be in Town till Thursday when I hope to see you. Could you not run down to-morrow evening to see me. It seems such so age since I have spoken with you and I can assure you I quite long for a quiet little chat with my old man, my dear darling venerable.

London Bouverie Sunday Eveg 9 o'clock

My dearest Bella,

As I have been completely sold to-day, and am feeling horribly blue, wretchedly cobalt, disagreeably desolate, I am going to wreak my misanthropy on you, and bother you about a lot of things of which I have been thinking.

First of all, by some misunderstanding, Mr Hegarty didn't dine with us to-day and consequently I had not even the satisfaction of being able to say unto myself Well, if you would have preferred being with Bella, still you are doing your duty in paying all the respect you can unto a good fellow, and most valued friend of your Father's - you see I couldn't even gannoon myself with that small specific, so I ate my dinner with the best

grace possible, potted everybody, was surly to all, and escaped to my den in Bouverie - have written a multitude of people on different matters, looked at Ledgers, Cash books, Cheque books, etc., and, after all this dreadful wickedness, complete the scene by annoying you.

I commenced the day badly I fear, for I was violating the Sabbath by violetting in the field and roads, this morning, round Pinner.

London, Bouverie Friday after.

My dearest Bella

How shall I thank you enough for your kind note - in what way can I pour forth my appreciation of your thoughtfulness and goodness in writing to me in so fond a manner? I give up the sweet talk in despair, for if one were to search out the most telling words of gratitude from all the vocabularies, written and unwritten, of all the nations - the mystic Chaldean the classic Latin, the pure Greek, the rare Hindostanee, the trenchant Saxon, the modern French, the mellifluous Italian - yet would all these fall far short of expressing that sentiment of thankfulness which I so strongly feel. The pleasure I derived from your letter, too, was heightened by the knowledge that my friend Fred likewise received an epistle from Brighton so, knowing how much I prized your fondly written lines, I could estimate his gratification of the receipt of his epistle.

The Beeton letters and a large collection of cookery books will be auctioned at Sotheby's on 10 April. For details phone: Polly Baynton-Coward 0171-408 5301.

Last week we inadvertently reported that the Radio 4 play 'Spoonface Steinberg' was to be repeated on February 4. It is, in fact, to be broadcast again on February 22 after an unprecedented demand for the repeat. We are sorry that we did not credit Lee Hall as the author of the piece. Lee Hall's first play, 'I Love You Jimmy Spud', is to be filmed this summer.

INSIDE

John Walsh meets Jane Birkin

... and finds she wants to be a hit in her home country **page 3**

Byron: the poet as pop star

Sex, scandal and the roles the writer played **page 7**

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A noughts and crosses puzzle caught on camera: noughts to play and win

If we ever make contact with beings from another galaxy, it would be very surprising to discover that they played chess, bridge or backgammon. The rules are too intricate and arbitrary to expect them to have evolved independently among a different intelligence. They might just play a form of Go, though probably not on our 19 by 19 boards. What they would almost certainly do, however – if they have discovered the joys of games at all – is to play some version of Noughts and Crosses. The idea of making connected lines of symbols on a square grid is so natural, they must surely do it everywhere in the universe. They would know, of course, that the traditional three-by-three game always ends in a draw if the players know what they are doing. (Unlike the opponent of the little girl in the picture, who has already gone fatally wrong. She has only to put her Nought in the centre now, and she will win in a couple more moves). Our aliens might also have discovered – if their gravity is strong enough to support the game at all – that Connect-4 (in which pieces must drop to the lowest available point in vertical lines on a seven-by-seven grid) is a win for the player who goes first. (Though it took a good computer program to find the strategy leading by

force to a winning line of four in a row.) But where would our alien friends stand on the game of five-in-a-row, also known as Go-Moku or, in its more refined form, Renju? In its casual form, the game is played on sheets of graph paper, just like an extended game of noughts-and-crosses, and the winner is the first to make five in a row. There is some evidence that such a game existed in China around 4,000 years ago, though the Ancient Greeks and pre-Columbian Americans seem also to have discovered it independently. The game took a more formal shape around 700AD, when it began to be played in Japan with black and white stones on a Go board. It was not until towards the end of the 19th century, however, that books began to appear on the theory of the game. At around the same time, a general suspicion appeared to emerge that the player who moved first had too much of an advantage. In Japan and some other countries, however, they repaired the game well enough for it to take its place alongside the traditional boardgames of Go and Shogi (Japanese chess). The rule-changes were made in 1899, when the name of the formal game was changed to Renju – which means “string of five pearls” in Japanese. The new rules form a set of restrictions on types of move that the players are allowed to

William Hartston discovers the thinking man's noughts and crosses

you can change the rules. Most of the world – including Britain – seems to have opted for the former solution. Five-in-a-row is still played here by school-children who have moved beyond old-fashioned noughts-and-crosses, but no form of it ever seems to have been taken seriously enough for formal competitions to have been instigated. In Japan and some other countries, however, they repaired the game well enough for it to take its place alongside the traditional boardgames of Go and Shogi (Japanese chess). The rule-changes were made in 1899, when the name of the formal game was changed to Renju – which means “string of five pearls” in Japanese. The new rules form a set of restrictions on types of move that the players are allowed to

make. For example, the simplest way to ensure that you will form a line of five in a row is to form a row of four, open at both ends – 0000-. Your opponent cannot block both threats simultaneously. And the simplest way to ensure that you will be able to form such a row of four is to form two distinct open-ended rows of three (in different directions) with a single move. The new rules specified a 15 by 15 board and banned such “double-three” formations. They also banned “double-fours” and “overlines” (lines of more than five in a row), and anyone making such a formation would lose the game instantly. This introduced a new possibility to win a game by creating a threat that could only be met by making one of the proscribed patterns. The new game of Renju was rapidly seen as more than just a repair of the traditional Go-moku. It was a game of strategy in its own right. And its champions quickly became respected alongside those of other traditional Japanese board games. In the novel “The Master of Go” by Yasunari Kawabata (available in the Penguin Modern Classics series) there is an account of an exclusive gathering at the opening ceremony of the 1938 world Go championship match: “All told,

four masters were in the assembly: on Shusa's left, Sekine, thirteenth in the line of Grand Masters of Shogi, as well as Kimura, Master of Shogi, and Takagi, Master of Renju, all brought together for this, the commencement of the Master's last match.” The game, however, has been slow to spread beyond Japan. The International Renju Federation was formed in 1988 and international tournaments are now held in Japan, Sweden, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Latvia and Russia. According to the current rating list, the world's top twenty players include 12 Japanese, four Russians, two Latvians and two Estonians. But why has Renju never become popular in England? Surely it is just the sort of game to appeal to our large population of game-players. I suspect the answer is as simple as the game itself. One can get away with playing bridge because it is a team game and therefore ostensibly sociable. Backgammon and poker players are admired for their ability to gamble without flinching. One can now (thanks to the efforts of Nigel Short) describe oneself as a chessplayer without inviting looks of pity. But Renju? Deep down, games players like to be taken seriously. Noughts and crosses is a step far.

Games people play

Pandora Melly discovers soccer therapy.

Edward Under-Pole, 38, actor and Crystal Maze master.

Let me tell you, the game I like playing is football with my mates. Now you might think that's highly unlikely, because at school I was the cliché weed, but I've got a photograph to show you: me and a couple of the team taken by myself when we'd just finished playing in last week in Regent's Park.

I learnt to play football in 1989 because I was suffering from a broken heart – a badly broken heart – and some chums said “come and play football”.

It takes me back to when I did my first ever gig with a band, I was looking forward to it because I thought I was so mercurial, and I can tell you that before the end of the first song I wanted to stop because I was absolutely exhausted. So I started to go running so I'd be a bit fitter. When you run, it hurts at first, then you get this terrific rush from the endorphins. That was 1978.

Let's go forward, back to the broken heart.

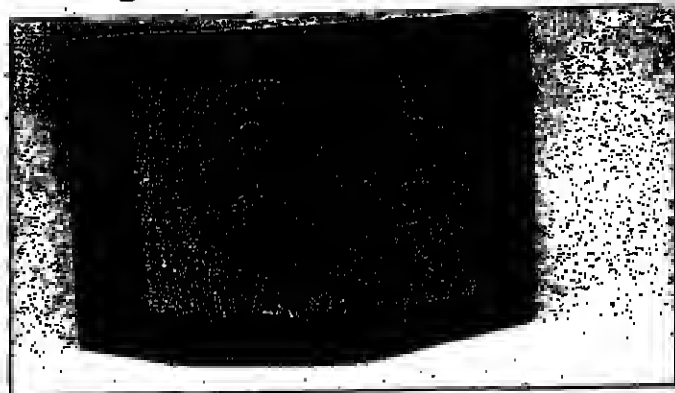
Some of these football chums were quite rough, and we played on concrete. They knew I was sad because I'd been deserted, but they never talked about it, they just played football with me and it was as though someone was putting their arms around me very comfortably. All that summer we played football and got increasingly fit; each of us thrumming with endorphins.

But this is the crux: if you invite someone to play, they reveal everything about their character. You sometimes think, “Hey, well, I don't like this fellow.” Some people play like professionals, you know, jostling and fouling and such. After about a year of this, I was much comforted and started to get better. I put it all down to football.

Premier League footballers use the Mitre Ultimac professional standard matchball, £49.99 from Lillywhites (0171-915-4000).

Don't junk it... use it

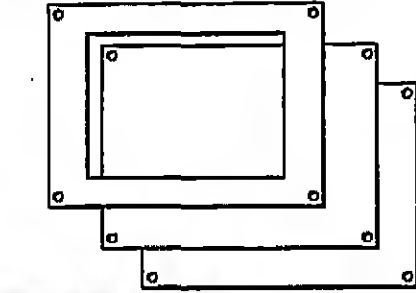
From lager can to curved picture frame



This design is a cheap and cheerful way to create frames for those pictures that don't quite deserve the expense of buying one ready-made. All you need is an empty lager can, some pieces of cardboard, heavy-duty scissors and some string (ideally elastic) and toggles.

As a handy tip, I can recommend starting with a full lager can. It helps get you into the right mood. First empty the lager can. Then, using a heavy pair of scissors, cut off the top and bottom and cut down the centre.

Flatten out the rectangle of metal you have just created. Measure the margins to the required size, and cut out the centre section. Use a pair of pliers to fold and crimp the edges flat. Quite apart from giving the frame a more finished look, this avoids the danger of cutting yourself on sharp edges.



Cut two pieces of cardboard slightly smaller than the frame, then punch holes in the corners of cardboard and frame. String together with elastic string and toggles, or use ribbon or plain string. By pulling the string tight, you can give the frame an original curved shape



which also helps it to stand up on its own. (Which may be more than you can manage yourself, if the first few lagers cause refuse to cooperate with your intentions.) Finally, if still sober, you can decorate the finished frame by tapping or scribing designs onto it.

Bawn O'Beime-Ranelagh

The games page is edited by William Hartston

Chess William Hartston

Deviants take note: on 4 January in Hastings, the British Chess Variants Society was formed and a new respectability was created for the previously disorganised world of deviant forms of chess.

The various fields of interest of the new society are well illustrated in its own journal “Variant Chess” which appears four times a year (subscription £5.00). The current issue contains articles on Losing Chess, where the object is to lose all your pieces, where the rules specify mandatory capturing. Cylinder Chess, where you play on a normal board but imagine it would round into a cylinder with the a-file and h-file joined, and Progressive Chess in which White plays one move, then Black two, White three and so on. No checks allowed before the final move of any.

Like most chess fanatics, I had played all these versions when I was at school, but never realised how much they had been analysed and developed as valid forms of the game. Here are some examples of the sort of things deviancy can offer that straight chess cannot. First, a game of Losing Chess won by a computer program.

White: IZNOGOU
Black: R Salvadori
1 c3 b5 2 Bxb5 c6 3 Bxc6 Nxc6 4 b4 Nxb4 5 a4 Nxc2 6 Qxc2 Qc7? (the losing

move!) 7 Qxc7 Rh8 8 Qxd7 Rxb1 9 Rxb1 Kxd7 10 Rh7 and Black resigned because of 10...Bxb7 11.Kc2 Bxc2 12.Bh2 Bxb1 13.Bxc7 Bxc7 14.c4 Bxc4 15.d4 Bxd4 16.Kd2 Bxd2 17.Nf3 Bxf3 18.Kd1 Bxd1 19.h3 Bxa4 20.h4.

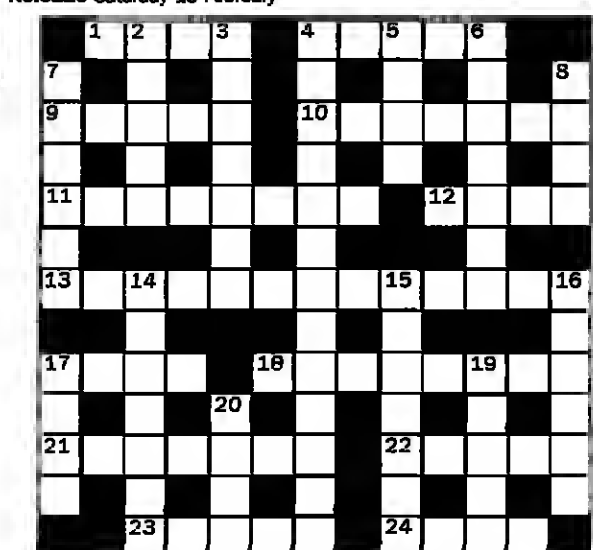
Apparently, 1.c3 is thought to be the best opening move (all other moves of central pawns have been shown to lead to a forced loss), though 1.b3, 1.b4, 1.g3 and 1.g4 are also well considered. For real deviation, however, I can recommend Progressive Cylinder Chess. Try this game – remember, the number of moves per player goes up by one each time, and the edges of the boards are joined so, for example, the f1-h3 diagonal continues along a4 to e8.

White: G Cornacchini
Black: G P Jelliss
1 g4 2 g5. Bxd2+; (the bishop emerges seamlessly from h6 to a5 and continues on its way) 3 Bxd2. Ba4. Bxd7+; 4 Kxf7, Nf6, Nc4. Nxd2; 5 Qxd2, Qxd7, Qxc8, Qxd8, Kd2; 6 h5, hxc4, g3, gxc2, fgl=Q, Rxd8+; 7 Kc3, Na3, Nb5, Nxc7, Raxg1. Rf1 mate.

For further information about the British Chess Variants Society, contact GP Jelliss, Top Floor, 63 Eversfield Place, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex, TN37 6DB.

concise crossword

No.3223 Saturday 15 February



- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 German car (4) | 2 Rub out (5) |
| 4 Hasten (5) | 3 Hire agreement (7) |
| 9 Jewelled headress (5) | 4 Optical illusion (13) |
| 10 Erudite (7) | 5 Wander (4) |
| 11 Guitar-player's accessory (8) | 6 Chinese river (7) |
| 12 Remain (4) | 7 Fictitious work by Thomas More (6) |
| 13 Promotion (13) | 8 Nervous (4) |
| 17 Ineffectual type (4) | 14 Blood-sucking bat (7) |
| 18 Room heater (8) | 15 Building (7) |
| 21 Paper-folding (7) | 16 Excite (6) |
| 22 Drive (5) | 17 Forest (4) |
| 23 Small and delicate (5) | 19 Theme (5) |
| 24 Every (4) | 20 Part of leg (4) |

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Stirred, 5 Hilly (Sturdily), 8 Enquiry, 9 Longbow, 10 Pre-lead, 11 Okapi, 12 August, 14 Strone, 17 Strum, 19 Recital, 22 Engulfed, 23 Drawn, 24 Elder, 25 Stretch, DO Wk, 1 Shcep, 2 Iceberg, 3 Rhyme, 4 Delude, 5 Handout, 6 Libya, 7 Yawning, 13 Austere, 15 Similar, 15 Overt, 16 Crisps, 18 Rigid, 20 Cedar, 21 Lunch.

Bridge Alan Hiron

North-South game; dealer East
North
♠ Q 9 7 2
♥ A K 10 3
♦ A K 4
♣ K 5
West
♠ A 6 5 4
♥ Q 9 7 6 2
♦ J 10 9 3
♣ none
6
East
♠ 8
♥ J 5
♦ 8 6 5
♣ A Q J 9 8 7
South
♠ K J 10 3
♥ 8 4
♦ Q 7 2

North had an awkward decision to make on this deal from match-play. East opened a rather heavy (by modern standards) 3♣ but his choice lay between Three and Five, because 4♣ would have meant something quite different – a strong pre-empt in hearts. Now what do you do with the North hand after two passes? Double to suggest the major suits, or hid 3NT to protect ♠K from immediate attack? One North decided to double ad, after a response of 3♣ by South, pushed on to the spade game. West's lead of DJ against Four Spades was significant. Why had he not led his partner's suit?

Perplexity

Mixed doubles:

Ann creates furriest green satin gap.
The above sentence hides three loosely connected answers. All you have to do to find them is arrange the six words into three pairs, then rearrange the letters within each pair. The first correct answer opened on 26th February will

South got matters right: playing carefully he won in hand and led ♠10. West played low and the fall of East's eight strongly suggested a 4-1 trump break. Two top hearts were followed by a heart ruff, dummy was re-entered with a top diamond, and another heart was ruffed in hand. The dummy reversal was complete. Eventually declarer lost two club tricks and the ace of trumps.

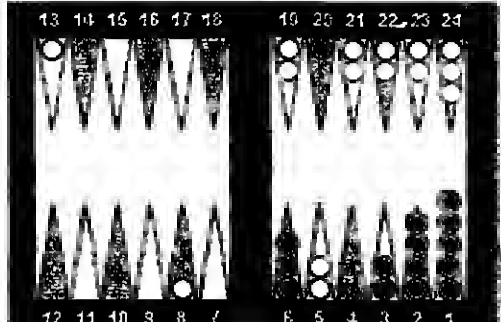
At the other table, North took a different view when he re-opened with 3NT rather than double when East's pre-empt came round to him. All passed, and the passive diamond lead from East left declarer looking at only eight tricks.

He won in hand and knocked out ♠A but was still looking for his ninth trick. I hope that you found the same solution that North did at the table. He decided that his best chance was to find East with a 1-2-3-7 distribution and, after cashing everything available, he led ♠K! East now had no exit cards and, at the end, the ♠10 became declarer's ninth winner. In spite of his neat play, North found himself losing 1 i.m.p on the deal.

win a copy of the new Chambers 21st Century Dictionary. Answers to: Perplexity, the Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL.

1 February answers:
BEANS+POTATO = SPROUT
works out as
36942+189908=217850 or
34962+180908=215870
Winner: H Lazda (Wokingham)

Backgammon Chris Bray




Here's a difficult play which I got wrong when it came up at the Double Fives the other day. Black has a 4,2 to play in this position. There were three choices: (a) 20/14 (b) 20/16, 6/4 (c) 6/2, 3/1

Over the board I made the fateful (and common) mistake of choosing a move without first deciding my plan, and compounded this error by forgetting to consider the position of the cube. I should have remembered Goulding's first law: “Have a plan, consider the cube, evaluate the candidate plays”. So let's do it the right way: What is Black's plan? He is way ahead in the race – 57 pips to 102 pips. As he has no priming potential and his home board cannot be strengthened it seems that Black's plan should be to play for the race. This indicates either play (a) or (b). What about the cube? Although Black leads the race by a long way he cannot double yet as his man on White's 5-point still has a long way to travel to reach his own home board. However, if Black can advance the man part of the way without being hit then he will have a strong redouble.

What about candidate plays? The three identified above are really the only possibilities. Given that we have decided to play for the race, play (c) can be discarded: it does nothing to make progress in the race and at the same time weakens the home board. Play (a) brings the man closest to home but leaves 26 shots. Play (b) makes slightly less progress in the race but leaves only 21 shots. After either play (a) or play (b) provided he doesn't get hit, Black will have a strong redouble which White might be able to take depending upon what his own roll was.

As Black will have a redouble after either play it is correct to leave fewer shots and therefore the correct play is (b). Over the board I made the awful play (c) ignoring one of my own lessons: in backgammon you must play to win rather than play not to lose.



HODGKIN

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arts & books

Jan Morris in Venice;
Peter Levi in Greece..... 6
Bernard Crick attacks
party propaganda; New
York's mating game..... 7

Flying blind

Raymond Monelle looks for more than merely superficial charms

OPERA Die Fledermaus Theatre Royal, Glasgow

The last thing Scottish Opera would want to find in a review of its new *Fledermaus* would be a reference to its last production – a clever-clever updating to 1990s Glasgow and a spectacular flop. But clearly it was a chastening experience, and Giles Havergal, director of the new version, was given a clear brief: no fancy ideas, no left-wing iconoclasm, just plenty of pretty costumes and traditional nostalgia.

There were, in fact, a few witty ideas. Alfred, the Italian tenor (cramped up to the skies by Richard Coxon), constantly serenaded the heroine with extracts from famous operas, including both *Bohème* and *Turandot*, which were presumably not familiar to Strauss or anybody else in 1874. Though most of the show was sung in English (the well-established Poutouney/Hancock translation), the Csardas was given in Hungarian with English subtitles, a hilarious operatic in-joke.

That apart, the sets were ravishing and the costumes unexceptionable, placing the piece a little later than its time of composition, perhaps about 1910. Havergal, director of Glasgow's Citizens' Theatre, is a resourceful man of the theatre, and he kept up a seamless flow of song-and-dance numbers and attractive tableaux, his designer (Kenny Miller) doing little more than paint huge flowers on the wallpaper and surround the stage with fairy lights.

Most of the cast had a nice, intuitive, light-footed swing; eventually the whole stage tilted and swayed to the rhythms of polka and waltz. Janis Kelly was a colourful, sumptuous Ros-

alinda, thoroughly physical and susceptible, with Peter Evans as a stinky and handsome Eisenstein. Andrew Hammond's Falke seemed at first a bit recessive, but his "Brüderlein" was a dream of lyric tone.

When it came to costuming Orlofsky, clearly nobody was ever going to disguise Anne Howells as a man, so she wore an intriguing combination of high boots and feminine décolletage that matched her mettlesome but seductive voice.

But success cannot be designed into a production, and this attractive show witnessed to the elusiveness of the work. Lisa Milne, as Adela, sang beautifully – a pearly "laughing song" – but her comic gifts extended no further than Glaswegian howls and catcalls. This sly, ironic operetta makes no sense as broad farce, and neither Milne, Havergal, nor any of the others seemed to have grasped the danger and despair that lie hidden within it.

Instead, they gestured and high-stepped along on the merest surface, where they were joined by a conductor, Nicholas Braithwaite, who groped vainly for the right style, jerking when he should have floated, never finding a convincing tempo or any trace of delicacy. With no message from the podium, the orchestra just sight-read. Maybe *Fledermaus* is about bad behaviour redeemed by generosity of spirit, or the sorrowful charm of a society that is slipping away. Whatever its sidelong and sophisticated content, it is vastly beyond the larks of a seaside concert-party.

Further posts tonight, 18.30, 22 Feb (0141-332 9000)

Race on the Rialto

Paul Taylor on a new staging that does justice to Shakespeare's court drama

THEATRE The Merchant of Venice Birmingham Repertory Theatre



David Schofield invites you to see Shylock's behaviour as a warped exercise in standing on his dignity

Photo: Ivan Kymel

In 1988, Bill Alexander directed an RSC version of *The Merchant of Venice* with Antony Sher as a flamboyantly Levantine Shylock in a city where Christians literally spat racial hatred and where a Yellow Star of David was eventually sprayed, like some prefiguration of the Holocaust, on the back wall. Returning to the play now, Alexander happily avoids what has become the orthodoxy in the interim, of relocating *The Merchant* in the world of modern banking. Presenting a genial, broadly assimilated City of London Shylock always raised more problems than it solved. For a start, Christian yuppies aren't ideally placed to look down their noses at usury. And, if Shylock has integrated so successfully, why does he declare anti-Christian loathing in his first scene?

Set in period, in a dark, sinister Venice whose vistas are framed by decaying brick pillars, Alexander's new staging has the great merit of keeping your feelings fluid throughout. Precisely because he makes no overt bid for audience sympathy, David Schofield's splendid, heavily accented and sardonically humorous

Shylock becomes a moving (yet never pathetic) figure. He's played here as rebarbatively hard and precise – so punctilious he even remembers to brush his knees after collapsing at the news of his daughter's abscondment; so meticulously well-briefed he doesn't need to look at the bond when forced to check its details, he just scrolls through it silently in his head.

But this staging also amplifies our sense of the routine intimidations Shylock has to cope with. Salerio and Solanio mockingly impersonate his brief under his very window and kick at the door in a frenzy of contempt. Every time he steps outside, there's danger in the air; and you can understand Shylock's behaviour, in this performance, as a warped exercise in standing on his dignity. Even when he has to pick himself up from the wreckage of the court case and have the boos at the exit, Schofield manages to keep a straight back and a measured tread.

Cathy Tyson is a warm, appealing heroine but it's good that she does not downplay the fact that, with Shylock, Portia egregiously fails to practise what she has only just been preach-

ing about mercy. In the final act, she reveals a cropped head to Charles Edwards's excellent, anxious Bassanio, who strokes the boyish curls in some bemusement, as if this haircut obscurely complicates his emotional graduation from male friendship with Doo Warrington's absurdly plummy Antonio to marriage with her.

I had thought that my days of laughing at those tedious Gobbos were over, but here both father and son are played in a West Indian accent and in what looks like a bizarre, expertly organised identity crisis by the rasta-locked Jah-Man Aggrey. Martin Hutsoo also makes a big impact as the Prince of Aragon.

The evening ends on an uneasy note. After the other couples have trooped into Portia's house, Shylock's daughter finds herself alone in the garden with Antonio, who throws her a look of profound distaste. Beginning with a girl who is trapped by the dictates of her father's will, the play ends, in this account, with a girl doomed to carry the burden of her father's sins.

Birmingham Rep (0121-236 4455) to 8 March

Still waters run deep

A work about the mating game. Or so it seems to John Percival

DANCE Stream Rambert Dance Apollo, Oxford

Christopher Bruce calls his latest creation for Rambert Dance Company *Stream*. Many of us will, I suppose, identify it with the ever-rolling one to which life is likened in the hymn – the end echoing its beginning – suggests a continuity into infinity, and the content (if I may use that word for dances that carry no specific plot) seems to confirm that impression.

The main part of *Stream* shows us two groups: four men and four women. The choreographer colonises the stage for themselves and fill it with tough, aggressive movement. But after the group of women has passed across the back of their territory, I sense a change of tone in what the men are doing: a slight jokiness in their blockiness, almost like moments in Bruce's Rolling Stones ballet *Rooster*.

Or is it just that, influenced by the feminine presence, we look at masculine display differently, more ironically? Either way, the men take themselves off and the women now occupy the stage. Whereas the men stuck out for individuality even when acting as a group, there is more togetherness in the women's dancing, a gentle sense of supporting each other. This remains true even when just two of them are left alone, and makes Sheron Wray's subsequent solo even more melancholic in its solitariness.

Then comes a complete contrast. Philip Chabon's music, hitherto jauntily rhythmic for the men, smoothly flowing for the women, suddenly sounds like a jolly Irish dance-hall, and both groups come together on stage, dividing

up into couples for what quickly develops from socialising into the mating game. So we know that even if time is going to bear us all away, life will continue.

As prologue and epilogue, we see life in the form of two duets. Patricia Hines and Jan de Schynkel start the piece, their couplings sometimes taking strange forms: she reclining while her feet seize his neck, he soon after holding her cheeks from behind and rocking her head from side to side.

The final entry is for Didi Veldman and Paul Liburd: he very cocksure and dominant at first, slippery as a lizard, but soon roasting into a quieter steadiness, content to be an equal partner. And actually theirs is not quite the final entry, since the curtain falls on the opening couple repeating their arrival, the cycle returning.

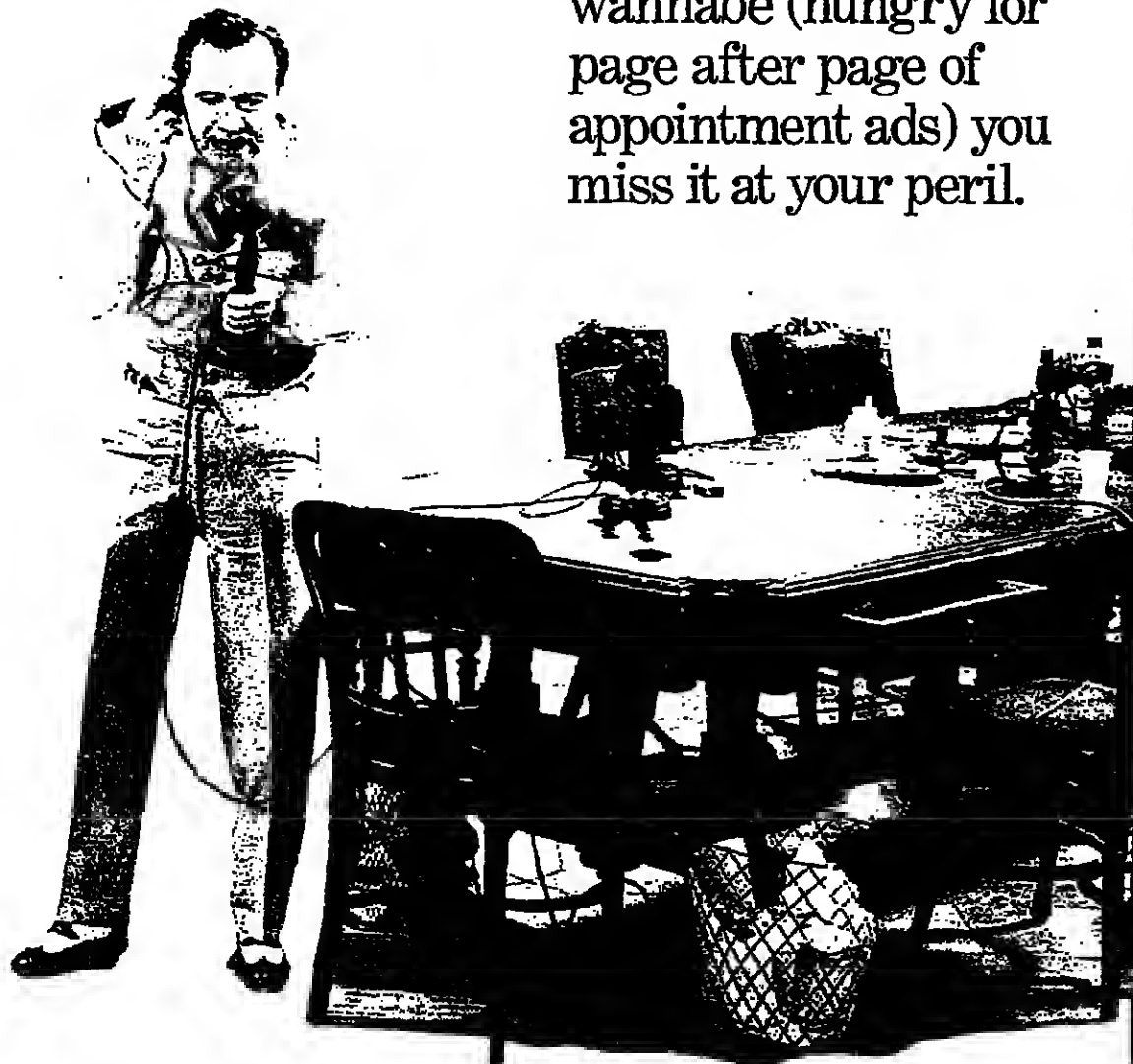
That's how I see it, anyway, but Bruce's programme note tells how the creative process began as abstract movement ideas inspired by fragments of sound that Chabon provided before development into a full electronic score of noises suggesting machinery, nature and instruments melded into real music. The creators, Bruce says, found their own ideas and feelings about the work, but he invites spectators to enjoy the movement for itself and to make their own interpretation. Sadly, we read, this proved beyond some spectators on Rambert's Russian tour, but an Oxford audience responded warmly to this week.

On tour, reaching London for a week at the Peacock Theatre over Easter.

THE INDEPENDENT

HOLD THE FRONT PAGE

Next Monday *The Independent* introduces a new section, MEDIA+. Whether you are a bombarded civilian, a professional communicator or a wannabe (hungry for page after page of appointment ads) you miss it at your peril.



	THE FILM Hamlet	THE PLAY The School for Wives	THE GIG Suzanne Vega
overview	Not content with giving his Prince of Denmark three times on stage to date, Kenneth Branagh directs and plays the lead in <i>Hamlet</i> the movie. The screenplay is 100 per cent William Shakespeare. At 242 minutes it's also almost completely uncut. A galaxy of stars support – from Billy Crystal to Jack Lemmon – in an attempt to bump up the film's US box-office appeal.	Having brought Jessica Lange to London for <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> , Peter Hall goes to the other end of the celebrity spectrum by casting Eric Sykes as a dotty old servant in Molière's comedy of cuckoldry. Peter Bowles stars as the merchant Arnolphe, who's forced to play the French horn. Gillian Keirney is his wife-to-be, imprisoned to protect her chastity.	Folk never sounded as chippy as when the former model from New York recorded her first album in 1985. Icily intelligent, her supporters argued, Yuppie mood music, countered the detractors. Whatever, Vega has thawed out a bit now, and, to accompany the release of a new album, <i>Nine Objects of Desire</i> , she has embarked upon a European and British tour.
critical view	Adam Mars-Jones thought it deeply flawed but that the weak bits were "redeemed by the one decision that seems perverse, even indefensible, the decision that is never made in cinema: trusting the author." <i>The Telegraph</i> warned to a film filled with powerful performances: "You are unlikely to see a better Claudius than Derek Jacobi's... Julie Christie is extraordinary." It added: "Branagh [the actor] makes a virtue of his limitations... [his] production follows his own lead." But the <i>Times</i> felt our Ken had gone too far to woo a young audience: "It's all rather exhausting," its critic wheezed. "I thought it would bore me," confessed the <i>Guardian</i> . "But it didn't."	Paul Taylor enthused: "Arnolphe is a role that requires the ability to listen comically... Bowles is hilarious at such moments." Sykes, he added, exudes a "delightfully knowing brand of benign amusement". The <i>Telegraph</i> agreed: "one of the funniest shows in the West End." "Even if Bowles misses the sheer madness which Ian McDiarmid brought to the role in the 1993 Almeida revival," wrote the <i>Guardian</i> , "he vividly captures Arnolphe's almost satanic cunning." "I went out touched and delighted," raved the <i>Times</i> . "Who could upstage Bowles in this mood? Not Sykes, not all three Marx brothers, not anyone."	Glyn Brown had liked the warmth of the new LP but felt it didn't work in concert: "Played against her delicate earlier stuff, the newer work tired with lengthy rock-outs from her backup boys, Vega almost drowned in the <i>mélée</i> ." "Most moving when it is most conventional," judged the <i>Times</i> . But the <i>Guardian</i> was less indulgent: "Marriage and motherhood may have settled Vega and, she claims, improved her voice. But the overall feeling was of a talent that has lost its edge." "Sophistication seems to have been achieved at the expense of warmth and melody," the <i>Telegraph</i> pontificated. "Few of the new songs were as approachable, or as engaging, as [the] old favourites."
on view	At a cinema near you. Bring a cushion, and make full use of the intermission.	At the Piccadilly Theatre, London W1 (0171-369 1734) to 26 April.	Tours to Nottingham, Birmingham, York, Manchester and Glasgow in March.
our view	A solid but hardly inspired Dane, and you'll squirm at some of the cameos, such as Robin Williams's execrable Osric.	Ranjit Bolt's pithy verse adaptation complements some fine performances. A return to form for Peter Hall.	The sharp, bright beauty is still there but Vega seems to be striving for the impossible: to be a rock chick who plays an acoustic.

KEY

DEADLY POOR OK GOOD EXCELLENT

...the... beauty is
...the... seems to
...the...
...the...
...the...

Seeing eternity in the Venetian sand



Jan Morris sifts through the myths of a city where history was as clear as mud

This is an academic work, by an associate professor at Princeton, dressed up in the Yale manner as a sumptuous coffee-table book. As such it will give pleasure to all classes of Venetian aficionado, except perhaps those who believe that Venice is ill-served without some element of careless rapture. If you weary of the style (Professor Brown is no John Julius Norwich) you will certainly enjoy the lavish, varied and elegantly disposed pictures. If you find yourself overwhelmed by the mass of incidental evidence, the bold main theme of the book is sure to interest you.

It concerns, *au fond*, the Venetian relationship with time. It starts with a plaque on a pulpit at Torcello illustrating Kairos, the classical wheeled figure of Opportunity, being seized by the hair by a youth; it ends with a sculpted figure on a wall of Ca' Bembo, in the *sceniere* of Canareggio, of a primitive holding a solar disc, a figure of eternity. Professor Brown's thesis, developed with an infinity of scholarly allusion, is that the Venetians more or less made up their own time. A

Venice and Antiquity: the Venetian sense of the past by Patricia Fumini Brown, Yale University Press, £45

people of opportunism from the very start, by trial and error, fraud and imagination, by grabbing the passing chance and exploiting even the most improbable allegory, they created in the end the myth of a City-State that seemed eternal. "Venice has preserved her independence during eleven centuries", Voltaire wrote, "and I flatter myself will preserve it for ever".

The original problem was that Venice started from scratch, as a community of people driven out of the mainland into the islands of the lagoon. In the aftermath of the Roman Empire, it could claim no classical origins, like most Italian cities. It was a mixed bag of refugees, with no civic claim to descent from Rome. This at least meant that it had no pagan roots either, so the obvious thing to do was to project itself as a Christian city of God. Chroniclers learnt to emphasise that the Venetians had been driven into the lagoon not by

the Christian Lombards, but by the impious pagan Attila, frequently portrayed with horns; and presently the miraculous discovery of the relics of St Mark, bursting from a column in the Basilica, proclaimed Venice a genuinely apostolic city. It had been founded on the day of the Annunciation - March 25, also the day when God made Adam - and there was obviously something providential about its peculiar situation and ever-growing prosperity there in the watery wastes.

The Renaissance, seducing Venetians as it seduced all other Italians, changed the perspective rather, and made paganism fashionable again. Petrarch was all the rage in Venice. Now Venetian aristocrats liked to claim Roman pedigrees, and it was often claimed that Venice was actually older than Rome, having been founded in an earlier form on the mainland. Like many another European people - even the distant Welsh - the Venetians toyed with the idea of having Trojan origins: did not the very word "Venetia" stem from "Aeneas"? They began to see antiquity in humanist terms - "shep-

herds, nymphs, and verdant groves," in Professor Brown's words - and to imagine the earliest lagoon settlers as people of Arcadian virtue.

Finally, in the heyday of the Republic, the Venetians became less interested in their past than in their magnificent present, the terrific opportunities always waiting to be seized, the promise of everlasting splendour. They had made good use of antiquity, in creating a national myth, and they were to live upon its accretions until, 200 years ago this year, it all collapsed in ignominy. "J'ai occupé ce matin", General Louis Baraguey d'Hilliers reported to Napoleon, "la ville de Venise, avec la 5e demi-brigade de bataille"; and that was that.

This is a pitifully inadequate and simplistic attempt to reflect what Venice and Antiquity is about. The book is a prodigious assembly of facts, conjectures and illustrations concerning what psychiatrists might call Venice's efforts to find itself - and to project itself. Professor Brown may not be the most lucid of expositors, but she is a scholar of stunning range and force, and

she seems to grasp the very idea of Venice, its very stones in fact, to shake the truth out of it.

She finds evidence of the Venetian concern with antiquity in every aspect of the place. She scours the city for remains of the booty brought from Byzantium, from the Aegean, from the Italian mainland, by which the Serenissima tried to demonstrate its pedigree: not just the familiar figures, marbles and Byzantine treasures of San Marco, but a mass of Roman tombstones, unnoticed pillars and reliefs. She describes the growth of antiquarianism in the 14th century, the gradual absorption of classical forms and images into the Venetian aesthetic. She pursues her purpose through literature, art, architecture, cartography, geology, even astrology, and if sometimes one is inclined to forget just what the purpose is, and she occasionally has to pause and remind us (and perhaps herself), nevertheless the virtuoso nature of the pursuit itself is a marvel to watch.

She is at her best, I think, when she is discussing the particular Venetian truncations of time - an

essential process, I suppose, in the evolution of civic eternity. I have always thought, for example, that the portal of the Arsenale was just a flamboyant expression of Venetian self-esteem, a bodge-podge of motifs tumbled rather raffishly together. Professor Brown suggests it more exactly. It includes a date in Roman numerals recalling the city's legendary foundation in 421, a deliberate copy of a Roman arch at Pula, two pairs of Byzantine columns, a standard 15th-century Venetian lion of St Mark, a scallop shell, a couple of decorative urns and sundry statues of pagan import, all providing a ceremonial entrance to the centre of Venetian naval power. In short, it turns out to be a kind of architectural index of Venetian historical pretensions.

Or take Carpaccio's glorious *Entombment of Christ*, beautifully reproduced here in the whole and in detail. Professor Brown uses this picture as an example of "contemporising antiquity" - muddling time again. Classical ruins are scattered about the picture, along with skulls and bones to represent the

distant past and a culture long gone: but on a ridge in the background, together with a flock of sheep, are two purely contemporary figures, dressed anachronistically in the 16th-century manner. One is a shepherd boy playing a pipe, the other a bearded scholar-looking figure, a philosopher perhaps, or a Renaissance poet, in attitudes so motionless, yet so alive, that they might be interpreted as timeless.

As it happens, timeless is what Venice always was to me. Despite the tourists and the motor-boats, the film festival and Harry's Bar, the old city still seems to inhabit a moment that is eternal. Professor Brown, in her remarkable and loving book (for she clearly does love Venice, even if she does talk about influencing the articulation of its urban environment) demonstrates throughout how Venice's concept of time is reflected in its art: and nothing is more purely Venetian, to my mind, than the silent hush, so curiously still, confident and deliberate, that is illuminated for ever by the lightning-flash in Giorgione's *The Tempest*.

An Englishman aboard

Dea Birkett on Chinese whispers

The River at the Centre of the World by Simon Winchester, Viking, £18

There are rivers, mere stretches of water which flow freely and look lovely. And there are rivers that are highways, the M1s of our imaginations. The Yangtze, the world's fifth longest waterway, is a river of this mighty kind. A battle-ground, a transport route, a creator of legends, a killer in flood, it flows through the heart of modern China and back through the history of where East met, and fought, West.

Simon Winchester was determined to take on this giant. He made the winding 4000-mile voyage from its gaping mouth at Shanghai to the headwaters in Tibet, most of it in a first-class cabin on a public ferry, unashamedly in search of another time as much as another place. What he sees, and what he has read, are inextricable. Auden and Isherwood's Shanghai is as powerfully portrayed as the moon and McDonald's of the city today.

The author even carries photographs of the past, postcards of a land he wishes he was travelling through. He looks up from his 1931 snap of the Wind Moving Pagoda of Anqing, "its skirts dipping deep into the river, a sailing junk passing gracefully below" to the scene today, with "office buildings ... iron

wharves ... oily smoke." The note is one of despair: "ruin" and "ruination" appear frequently. Pollution, ugly architecture, tree-felling, greed, carelessness are among the things blamed for ruining the land of his septa soaps.

But from out of this gloom shines Lily, a young and modern Chinese woman, and the wisest choice of travelling companion. Lily is his filter on China today. When he berates the Chinese for killing off the Yangtze dolphin, she in turn berates him. Save the dolphins or starve the children, she gently reminds him.

Through Lily, we not only question the author's interpretation but the very things he seeks. Inquiring after the anchor (yes, the anchor) of the British frigate HMS Amethyst, which patrolled the river in 1949, the gatekeeper at the Zhejiang museum was adamant: there were plenty of Song dynasty pots and pans, but no anchor from a barbarian war vessel. Undeterred, Winchester strikes out to find relics which seem important to him. But when he refused to give up his search for a forgotten memorial to the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, Lily reached the end of her long tether. "Your bloody British Empire again!" she wailed.

With Lily beside him, he is instantly transformed from British bore to a funnel for every Englishman's vaguely formed hopes and fears for China. Rather than losing our sympathy, he guarantees it: we, of course, would have made exactly the same mistakes.

In this account with little hope, Lily is our one light. But even this beacon is smothered: for her own safety, Lily is not her real name. This silencing of China's small heroes is, perhaps, the greatest sadness.



Mythic meal: Greek pomegranates PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT HARDING

Macedonian blockheads and other Grecian turns

Peter Levi is beguiled by an American in Paros

Dinner with Persephone: travels in Greece by Patricia Storace, Granta, £17.99

To dine with Persephone is an extravagant fantasy, but I am sure that she would serve pomegranates as lush as those on the cover of this work - cut open to reveal the inside, as it were, of searings. One of my earliest memories of Greece is of an old French diplomat tranquilly diving for those black-throated marine hedgehogs with his wife. Whenever they found one, they ate it fresh. The taste is piquant - like that of Patricia Storace's book, which makes the Greece I remember seem as dull as a faded photograph.

The writing here is like that in a magazine, *Granta* now or the *New Yorker* as it was in Auden's time: perfectly acceptable to pass an hour or two, and memorable maybe once in 20 pages. The traveller is a New York poet of some wealth and eccentricity. She trots around many of the classical sites, though she is out of your old-fashioned Philhellene. She crosses many glittering seas, and visits many shadowy islands. Paros is made of marble; Andros of stone and silk; and Storace has an excellent nose for the innocent nooks of provincial life.

But she is modern, and a New Yorker. Her life in Athens often reminded me of the writer Takis (a transvestite who was murdered): it's an accurate depiction of the lower reaches of the population, though merely a foreigner's and not as deep as that of the obsessed novelist. The New York element comes

out in unexpected ways. Storace is knowing about whatever would interest an anthropologist (including mythology), but not knowledgeable. Yet her sheer eagerness, her appetite for life, makes out of the year-in-Greece exercise a victorious book.

The only classical text to which she is devoted is that of the dream interpreter, Artemidorus the Daldian - "the great Oecrocritical Master", as Thomas Browne called him. Dreams are back in fashion with NY intellectuals, so perhaps he has been recently translated. Artemidorus used to interest me because of his occasional insights into poetry. He tells you it is a good omen if nymphs reveal their breasts in a dream - as they do in Catullus, "standing up breast-high from the white foam" when Peleus first saw Thetis. The result was Achilles, but old Professor Frankel said that the image reminded him of some famous actress photographed in her bath.

Patricia Storace's year in Greece was an energetic one. She spoke the language, and endured many conversations with blockheads about Macedonia. There are moments when she registers a near miss: as when she thinks how like pomegranate trees are to decorated Christmas trees, and when she calls retsina "wine's equivalent of seawater". But she is enthusiastic enough to visit Evrytania, the most rugged and roadless of provinces when I was last there, with soldiers who had stood guard on bridges - for no obvious reason - for 25 years. Travelling on her own, she is

much subject to chance woosers, and records them all gleefully, but seems to record the physical hardships of modern travel. She has conversations which are seldom enlightening but almost always cast light on character - as on the night they decide that Christ did not to save man, but to save God.

The book has a climax, as travel books ought to have. Travelling by boat from Lesbos, she suddenly, at Istanbul, produces an ace of trumps from her sleeve. More than one theme is picked up there, as children in their finest clothes are off to be circumcised. She goes home by way of Athens, and on the last night a friend reproaches her for having lived a year in Greece without seeing a blue video. They watch a number together, including one in which a coffin has an erection and someone makes love with it: "this must be what the angels do to heaven". What would the great oecrocritical master make of that? Grind your teeth, Henry Miller.

What I liked about this book was that it was full of pep. And I liked Storace's sense of the language, "not voluptuous or litting but stony and earthy, a language full of mud and volcanic rock and glittering precious stones". I also liked the well-told tragedy of a Kiphiisia lady, so moving that I thought Storace could be a novelist more easily than a poet - but that, I'm sure, is because I do not know her poetry. She is probably the first true poet to have taken the Thasos ferry since Horace ran away from the Battle of Philippi; and that is a good omen, at least.

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When Harold met Shelley

Lachlan Mackinnon contests a sober view of a romantic superstar

Byron: The Flawed Angel by Phyllis Grosskurth, Hodder, £25

Byron was the first pop star. If the most significant cultural shift of the early 19th century was a shift in public attention from works of art to the lives of artists, he was central to that process. As the heir to a title, Byron was called on from birth to play a public role – but as the heir to no money, he couldn't play the one expected. He was cavalier about his literary leanings, as though afraid that writing were simply a higher form of being in trade, but it was through writing that he shaped for himself a new form of public identity.

Phyllis Grosskurth's account of Byron's background and childhood is dominated by the poet's mother. His father was a spendthrift roust who died in exile when Byron was four. The marriage had been bleakly miserable and left no financial protection. Handicapped by a club-foot, the child was deeply self-conscious: his mother's gauche approach to her English relations constantly betrayed her provincial Scottish upbringing, and although Byron seems never completely to have shaken off his accent he did all he could to erase his nationality. Her devotion to him was far greater than he consciously acknowledged, but may partly explain the irresponsibility shown by his having to leave Cambridge early with debts of £25,000 – a quite extraordinary sum in any age. An essential insecurity meant that he always had to live like a lord.

Byron's circles at Harrow and Cambridge were bisexual in orientation, and his early travels in Greece and Turkey have a strongly homosexual cast. Grosskurth believes that he wasn't very highly sexed, and that his promiscuity was a search for the home he never felt he had, but this is not very persuasive. Behind her theory of the search for a home is the iron hand of Freudian determinism, and it seems weirdly inappropriate to a being as self-creating as her subject.

However, Grosskurth writes sympathetically about Byron's affair with his half-sister Augusta Leigh and about his marriage to Annabella Milbanke. If a reference to women "twittering" about the poet's appalling marital behaviour seems odd-sided, she does bring out well how Annabella, under her mother's aegis, hardened into an avenging fury. Byron's major motives for marriage were to escape the looming scandal of incest and to secure his finances: he failed in both. He was already famous, the overnight success of *Childe Harold* in 1812 having assured this. The poem's morosely introspective hero was taken to be a mask for the poet, and Byron's own personality was now a matter of public fascination.

Byron's later years in Italian exile, his love-life and his involvement with the Shelley circles are all well documented here. One of Grosskurth's most successful re-creations of the poet's world is her account of his involvement with the cause of Greek independence from Turkey, and his journey to Missolonghi. "The role-playing – even in the most responsible moments – broke down in the effort to believe and to behave as though everything were real, that he actually had a role

to play although it was never to be revealed to him", she writes. Her description of Byron's death-agonies at the age of 36 is haunting.

Nonetheless, this is a book without a plot. If we want to know where Byron was or what he was doing on a particular day, it is a very helpful study, and Professor Grosskurth's work on the Lovelace Papers enables her to give a much fuller and more credible picture of Annabella than we have had before. The problems begin when we want to understand Byron himself, as the motivation she offers simply doesn't make sense. She does, though, offer a number of tantalising hints which point to a very different picture.

Byron's "only sense of himself", she writes, was "formed by the impression he made on other people" (hence his frequent dieting, because he was prone to obesity). This is the key to his story, and it explains something Grosskurth is baffled by.

On 19 February 1814, Byron saw Edmund Kean play Richard III, and was overcome. "Constantly he talked about Kean and about Richard. His resemblance to Hamlet's wavering uncertainties was far more marked, but it is intriguing that he could see a reflection of himself in Richard's evil twisted self", we are told. In November of the same year, at his first meeting with his prospective in-laws, Byron is found talking about Kean's acting.

In fact, Byron's fascination with Richard III makes perfect sense. Although his tendency to a passive drifting with events was at times marked, Byron was not a Hamlet. Hamlet resists and resents the indignity of being drawn into his father's ghost's revenge-plot, an action which must circumscribe his moral freedom. He wants to remain remote from the world, where Byron was determinedly worldly. Richard, on the other hand, is a self-making and self-aware villain who chooses to become what he does. Byron was drawn to him because he too wanted to shape his own destiny at whatever cost. He seems to have suffered from a free-floating sense of guilt, perhaps caused by his failure to respond to an excess of maternal love. By sleeping with his half-sister, he could give that guilt a real cause, and Phyllis Grosskurth's book makes it clear how central that relationship was.

She also suggests that his love for Pope's poems was "enhanced by the fact that Pope was crippled". Maynard Mack's biography of the latter points out that more painted, printed or sculpted images were made of Pope than of any other non-royal person in 18th-century England. Pope took great care that his deformity should be concealed, and it seems likely that his manipulation of his image was the precedent for Byron's own.

Byron's comic masterpiece, *Don Juan*, is a continuation of the Pope tradition of loving satire (Byron loves Don Juan just as Pope loves Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock*) and the fullest expression of Byron's pride in his virtuosity. The search for rhyme is an existential challenge, and Byron was far closer to the existential man who would emerge later in the century – in Dostoyevsky and in Nietzsche – than Phyllis Grosskurth's rather pedestrian book can show.



Detail, Byron after swimming the Hellespont, by Sir William Allan (ROY MILES GALLERY BRIDGEMAN)

Can't love ya 'cos ya phone's too big

E Jane Dickson doesn't want to go chic slumming with high-achieving New York girls

Sex and the City by Candace Bushnell, Abacus, £7.99

Sometimes the dedication is all you need. When you read Candace Bushnell's tribute to "Snippy, who once bit his teddy bear" on the flyleaf of *Sex and the City* you have the measure of the woman. Forget the ballsy title, forget the spiked heels waving skywards on the dust jacket. Bushnell, a columnist on the New York Observer may come on like a regular broad, but at heart she's a nice girl from Connecticut looking for Mr Right. You hope to God that the Snippy of the dedication is a bonafide infant but something tells you that he's probably a 49-year-old marketing exec with a fractious inner child. "Why have such scores of lovely, gifted girls married impossible men?" asked Robert Graves, and *Sex and the City* provides an answer, of sorts, for our times. In Bushnell's Manhattan, the lovely gifted girls are in revolt. "New York," she reports, "has bred a particular type of single woman: smart, attractive, successful, and...never married." This should not be confused with the proto-feminist rejection of traditional roles. Bushnell's girl-gang is out there hunting. Blahnik-shod Baccantes wilding the bars and boardrooms of the city, but their expectations and contemporary mating rituals, "as complicated and sophisticated as those in an Edith Wharton novel", have rendered them unmarriageable.

"What if," postulates Bushnell, "you're 40 and pretty and you're a television producer or have your own PR company, but you still live in a studio and sleep on a fold-out couch – the Nineties equivalent of Mary Tyler Moore? Except, unlike Mary Tyler Moore, you've gone to bed with all those guys. What happens to those women?"

Well, you get to drink and do drugs a lot, go to launches, sex clubs, topless bars (the *ne plus ultra* of chic slumming) and talk to handsome boys about trollopism. And if you're Candace Bushnell, you get to do it all on expenses.

Sex and the City is a looseish edited collection of her New York Observer column. The publishers say it "reads like a novel in serial format" but this is optimistic. Sketches of urban life coalesce into something like a narrative in the last third of the book, but although we are told, that the *dramatis personae* are "thinly fictionalised" versions of New York movers and shakers, characters largely remain two dimensional exemplars of the "Take my friend, Veronica" school of journalism.

All the same, there is a freak-show compulsiveness about *Sex and the City*. The men are posy little pushovers who make Sid the Severe look like Cary Grant. "If you're not in the looks Olympics you can become a very interesting person," allows one character, while another cuts his rival with the withering put-down, "Your phone's too big." It beggars belief that Bushnell's new breed of *Urbefrauen* would send their runts out for a sandwich, let alone negotiate them into marriage. There again, while we are constantly told how smart and funny these gals are there is scant evidence of it in their dialogue and Bushnell's epigrammatic style too often falls shy of the mark.

Maybe you have to be there. Maybe it is Bushnell's closely guarded sense of exclusiveness that makes you glad you're not. Fifteen years ago, when Cynthia Heimel, also a New York columnist, wrote *Sex Tips for Girls*, about the problems of finding a man in the metropolis, it became required reading for women from Hoboken to Huddersfield. Heimel drew you into a charmed circle of women who were sexy and witty and laughed at themselves. You wanted to be in her gang. With *Sex and the City* the reverse is true. When Candace and Carrie and their wispy WASPy friends have into view, you find yourself getting as lonely eyed as they are, anxiously scanning the page for someone more interesting. It is in the spirit of Heimel then, that the following advice is offered to Bushnell and her bunch of high-achieving neurotics: Girls, get over yourselves.

It's my party and I'll lie if I want to

Bernard Crick is disappointed by three faithful echoes of their masters' voices

Why Vote Liberal Democrat? by William Wallace, Why Vote Conservative? by David Willetts, Why Vote Labour? by Tony Wright, Penguin, £3.99 each

The past 30 years have seen a remarkable revival of political thinking and philosophy, but by academics and for academics. Little of this political capital has filtered down to the general reader. Political publishing, other than for academia, is a high-risk business. Penguin's stock list has 167 titles under Politics in four columns (many by classic authors). "New Age" has 19 full columns. That's consumer sovereignty for you.

So this unholy trinity of manifestos is a timely venture into popular political publishing: with a cheap price, and a uniform length of 100 pages, each title is written with accessible vigour. The idea was excellent; the results are somewhat disappointing, as they say.

Tony Wright, perhaps the brightest and best of the new MPs, wrote well on the history of socialism in his academic days and as joint editor of *Political Quarterly* often editorialised for cooperation between Labour and the Liberal Democrats. None of that appears here. He simply throws strong partisan punches at the Tories, with more right books to straighten him on my card. "Between 1979 and 1993 the income of the poorest tenth declined by nearly 20%, while that of the richest tenth increased by 20%"; a well-stated if familiar indictment of the Conservative record. Income differences and disabling poverty grew dramatically worse. Industry ran down to the benefit of City speculation; hence increased unemployment and government borrowing. Wright explains well the paradox of the anti-statism party that enhanced



So what's the big idea, John and Paddy and Tony? The three wise statesmen speak no evil

the arbitrary powers of government. His punches are thrown, however, with padded gloves. Wright discusses "the renewal and transformation of the Labour Party" under Tony Blair – that has brought hope to all those who want a sensible and radical party of reform to vote for and who understand that being radical and sensible do not have to be alternatives. Don't pause to puzzle whether those two vital "ands" are conjunctive or disjunctive. A chapter headed "New Labour, Old Values" beckons, but the values are left a wee bit vague.

Only William Wallace, for the Lib-Dems, body-snatches those abandoned triplets "liberty, equality, fraternity" (which he calls "community"). Wright recklessly quotes Yeats to the effect that Labour is "changed, changed utterly", but stops short of saying that "a terrible beauty is born". Too much of his pamphlet is on such a level of generality that truism wrestles with tautology. When it comes to policy, the vision becomes distinctly blurred.

I struggled to find meaning in Wright's words on taxation policy – surely basic to the common good.

Gordon Brown had not crossed the Rubicon when Wright wrote, but the latter must have seen the commitment to static tax levels coming and trimmed his sails. But Wright still flies a "stakeholding" colour, which seems meantime to have been lowered from the admiral's mast.

He is strongly for constitutional reform, but now has to sail around the rocks of PR. So he raises the possibility of "a system that makes all votes count": Blair code for the alternative vote, which is not PR. His calls for a "civic vision" and "a responsible society" are heartfelt and admirable. But how is the gross inequality that negates both to be tackled? By "training", it seems, and by the one-off cure-all windfall tax.

Wright speaks well for all of us who would do almost anything to get this lot out. But what then? I find it hard to share David Willetts' belief in a hidden agenda. I agree with Wallace that all too little is prepared. Lord Wallace has an easier ride because of the looser rein up there in the other House. The values he finds in a potted history of the Liberal Party (which ignores the still not irrelevant reasons for its collapse as

vatism (1992) warmly as a brave and intelligent failure to bridge the contradictions between Burkean traditionalism and the aggressive free-market ideology. These currents still pull in different directions.

"Middle England", however, knows that only the Tories can reconcile "two desires, each deep-rooted and legitimate": for "the fruits of economic success" but also for "the rootedness of long established society". The *volkgeist* can do what social theory cannot – even if most of Two-Brains' colleagues have firmly come down on the side of the fruits. Tradition demands we do not change the constitution, especially as it is so flexible (that it allows Conservatives in power to do whatever they want). All he adds to his old stuff are batteries of dodgy figures, like an old Fabian in reverse.

Above all else, "the party of commonsense" protects Middle England against "intellectual fads with continental models" (except those of Hayek, Von Mises and the Bruges Group). All this is good, stout potential nonsense, but no worse than Wright or Wallace in trying to present a picture of doctrinal unity within the party that is preposterous to common sense and observation.

Perhaps the sheer uselessness of these three books is signalled by the cover pictures of their smiling leaders. Big Brother watches their authors. "A writer cannot be a loyal member of a political party", said Orwell, who had just joined one. Only free men and women can debate politics honestly, and excessive loyalty destroys the lively, unexpected quirkiness of what Orwell had in mind when he "wanted to make political writing into an art". Perhaps there are no intellectuals left who could explain why they vote for their party without embarrassing the leaders of the moment.

No 47
Birdsong.

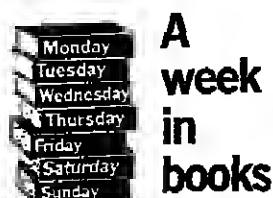
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Aunt we sexy

Philippa Gregory enjoys another combination of raunch and relatives

Part of the Furniture by Mary Wesley, Bantam, £15.99

Mary Wesley's new novel returns us to her vision of wartime England which made *A Camomile Lawn* and *A Sensible Life* such powerful and individual books. Their undeniable appeal was partly caused by an idiosyncratic view of wartime London – opportunistic, light-hearted, randy. For those readers brought up on the belief that the spirit of Dunkirk was one of heroic sublimation and self-denial, the view of wartime Britain as a place where a girl up from the country could be assured of a good time was refreshing.

The author was herself a young woman in wartime London, and part of the pleasure of her books is their sense of nostalgia, their authenticity, and the huge frisson which comes from reading someone old enough to be a great-grandmother writing raunch. It's like hearing your great-aunt swear in theory you know she can do it, but when she does it's still a thrill.

Part of the Furniture shares these hallmark strengths of a Wesley novel but the story strains the reader's credibility to the utmost. Juno Marlowe who has just been doubly raped by her adored cousins sees them off on a secret wartime mission and runs barefoot through the freezing streets during a bombing raid. Grabbed by a complete stranger, she goes to his house and gets into bed with him, where they both fall asleep. Imagine her consternation when she wakes in the morning to find him dead! What can she do but slide down the banisters and find her way to the dead stranger's father on his under-staffed idyllic country farm, where she is welcomed with open arms.

The rest is both predictable and so heavily signposted that even the densest reader might find their way through to the typically Wesleyan happy ending. In Wesley's erotic moral economy, unsympathetic



Still having fun after a long and sensible life: Mary Wesley

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW FORDSCOPE

characters are punished by death or celibacy, good people are rewarded with lastings of sexual pleasure.

The strength of this book and the others in the trilogy is the impression you gain that they were conceived as a whole. Never is a character introduced and then forgotten; even the walk-on parts will walk on elsewhere. Because of this, the novels become powerfully persuasive. A girl who has an Aunt in one of the novels will still have an Aunt in another. More intricately, another novel may feature the Aunt, who will refer to

her niece. It's a technical point, perhaps more interesting to other writers than to readers, but it shows the care Wesley invests in these novels.

For the casual reader the benefits are very great. The novels create a persuasive world of interconnected relationships, very like reality. This is perhaps why one forgives Wesley the absurdity of events. The bombs which fall but don't explode, the accidents, the coincidences, the missing letters, the surprises of love. She does her backgrounds so superbly that one can forgive the

silence of the foreground stories and the stereotypical characters. The beloved Devon landscape, the pet and eccentric members of county society carry the reader happily to the satisfying end.

This is not her best novel: Juno is too superficial, her story is too lucky, to engage the reader, unlike Poppy Carew or Hebe in Wesley's previous novels; but the many millions of fans of *The Camomile Lawn* and *A Sensible Life* are guaranteed the pleasure of meeting old friends and discovering new connections.

Wind-swept orphans in Illinois

Nick Kimberley finds a genuine sense of pain in the chronicle of Main Street, USA

All the Days and Nights and So Long, See You Tomorrow by William Maxwell, Harvill, £10.99 and £8.99 respectively

What noise do clocks make? "Tick-tock tick-tock". And horses? "Clap, clop, clop clop". And how would you describe the Outer Hebrides? They're "wind-swept islands". It's obvious. Rather too obvious, you might think, yet in William Maxwell's fiction, these are the noises clocks and horses make, and poor orphan girls do indeed come from the "wind-swept" Outer Hebrides. For Maxwell, the obvious is not necessarily to be scorned.

To an extent, that's because his subject matter is, precisely, the obvious – those small incidents that make a life; and then those small lives that make a community. Maxwell's community is very specific: Lincoln, the town in Illinois

where he was born in 1908. It is where Maxwell's imagination is most at home, preferably in the past, which "is always being plowed under". His fiction is a means of preserving some of the shards turned over by that plough.

The distance between narrator and author, even in autobiography, is always difficult to judge, and Maxwell intriguingly makes it more difficult. Over and over again, he tells us that his mother died when he was a child; that his father was in insurance; that his elder brother got his leg trapped in the wheel of a buggy; and had to have it amputated. We presume these details represent autobiographical fact, but as Maxwell writes in the 1991 story "The Front and the Back Parts of the House", this is only a starting-point: "Early on in the writing...the characters took over, and had so much to say to one another that mostly what I did was

record their conversation."

For 40 years, Maxwell was an editor, mostly of fiction, at the *New Yorker*. He must have come into contact with acres of well-scrubbed prose, and no doubt he did some scrubbing himself. Unsurprisingly, his own fiction would sit well in the *New Yorker*, where the novella *So Long, See You Tomorrow* first appeared. Throughout the two books, the tone is moderate and well-behaved, like the characters. In Maxwell's collected stories, *All the Days and Nights*, that eventually becomes oppressive as we find ourselves in a comfortably detached small town where a house might have a two-car, or even a five-car garage; and where coloured maids are commonplace. This is a placid, comfortable world in which all is for the best, even when it goes wrong: "I think it is true that we are all in the hands of God, what a capacious hand it must be."

There is a kind of complacency here that *So Long, See You Tomorrow* manages to undercut by that most reliable device, a murder – a passionate *crime passionnel* in which a poor farmer exacts revenge for his wife's adultery by killing her lover. The murderer's son, a friend of the narrator, is whisked away, and a few years later our storyteller meets him at school in Chicago; but the two pass each other by without a word. That failure of compassion haunts him into adulthood. He tries to make sense of it by imagining the events leading up to the murder.

There are times when Maxwell's characters seem to be living the placid, mildly neurotic lives lampooned in *New Yorker* cartoons, but in this novella there is a real sense of pain, of lives that go wrong and how we struggle to cope. For that I'm prepared to live with clocks that tick-tock and horses that clap-clop.

Independent choice: audio books

by Christina Hardyment

Audiobooks are, much more than the written word, "the words of a dead man modified in the guts of the living", as Auden puts it in "In Memory of WB Yeats". Badly done, they are infuriatingly intrusive on the intimate *lectio à la carte* between book and reader. But converts to audiobooks know how much added value they can provide: readers who enrich thrillers with suspenseful menace or illuminate difficult texts with lucid emphases, a painless dripfeed through dauntingly long classics, the opportunity to hear a great actor or, most fascinating of all, the voice of the author himself. On journeys they are especially attractive, shortening the *longueurs* of motorways, soothing one to sleep in strange hotel rooms.

There is no more companionable book on earth for the solitary traveller than John Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley* (Penguin, unabridged, c.8 hrs, £12.99), and since it is the tale of a journey at the wheel it is ideal driving fodder. When "the virus of restlessness" assailed him, Steinbeck took off from Long Island to tour America with his giant poodle Charley in a van converted to his own specifications. He discovered an America more eccentric, benign and human than anything that hit the headlines, and the wry wisdom with which he views human nature remains ineradicably in the mind. Gary Sinise's voice occasionally has a soporific quality, but he is an excellent Steinbeck soundalike.

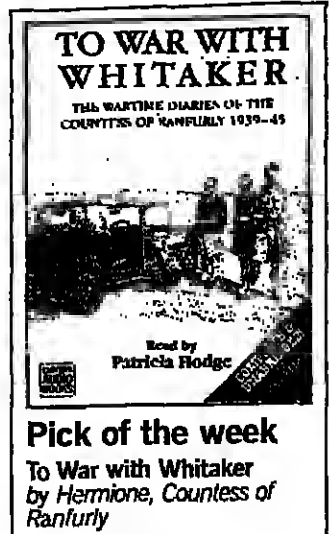
The most classic of all journeys is of course that of the "man of many wiles" Odysseus to Troy and back by way of Circe, Cyclops and innumerable trials. For non-classicists it has always been a daunting prospect, but Homer's *Odyssey* (Hodder, c.9hrs, £25), gives us the complete text in unusually accessible form. This version is read with unflagging excitement and sensitivity by Derek Jacobi in a translation by Allen Mandelbaum which avoids archaisms but retains all the thrilling rhythms of the original.

Dante's journey into the underworld is a different kind of classic journey, an allegory of past and future ages. Heathcote Williams reads *The Inferno* (Naxos, 4 hrs, £8.99) with a busby intensity that had me spellbound. Benedict Flynn's translation does full justice to the original and, as is usual with Naxos's always rounded and thoughtful productions, contemporary music adds drama to the reading.

The calm, clear-eyed heroine of Neville Shute's *A Town Like Alice* (Chivers, 10 hrs, £15.95) also makes a journey to hell and back in wartime Burma. Shute, a master storyteller, is rightly enjoying a return to popularity, but avoid the two cassette dramatised abridgements of the book just been released by the BBC. It really is worth buying this excellent complete version. Then wait for a long haul so that

you can enjoy every word of Robin Bailey's gentle, intense reading of this famous novel.

Poetry is a delight to have by one while travelling, but it can be much more easily murdered on tape than prose. Classic Poems (HarperCollins, 2.5hrs, £8.99) is a curate's egg, but brilliance easily outweighs the occasional dud and its astonishing cast of readers and many historic recordings make it an absolute must have. What greater added value could there be than T S Eliot, Auden, Hughes and Dylan Thomas reading their own verse. Boris Karloff intoning Kipling's "If" and Sybil Thormike ecstatically emoting "The Lady of Shalott"? Ralph Richardson makes Blake's "Tyger" lazily terrible, James Mason puts incalculable menace into Browning's "My Last Duchess" and Diana Quick shows us just why "Aurora Leigh" was a sensation in its day. It is an especial treat to have Burns and Yeats read with the Celtic lilt they deserve. Finally and most unmissable,



Pick of the week
To War with Whitaker by Patricia Hodge, Countess of Ranfurly

Patricia Hodge reads *To War with Whitaker* (Chivers, c.13 hrs, £16.99) with all the pluck and panache that its extraordinary author, Hermione, Countess of Ranfurly showed in her six years of wanderings through wartime Africa and Europe with a revolver tucked into her girdle, wheeling her way through the labyrinth of wartime bureaucracy in order to achieve her ambition: to stay as close as possible to her husband, and when he was taken prisoner, not to return to England until he did. Besides being a trusty blade-straight mate, Ranfurly is a born diarist and a natural yarn spinner, whose humour and ebullience delight the ear, but who can also be reasonably frank about the major personalities in the confused theatre of war that we glimpse behind Bogart's *Casablanca*. Arguably the star of the show, is the short and portly Whitaker, the Ranfurlys' English cook-butler who also refuses to be left behind and carries on intrepidly, whether crossing the desert perched on the luggage of the Baby Austin or dancing boomp-sadisy with his ladyship.

Paperbacks

By Christopher Hirst

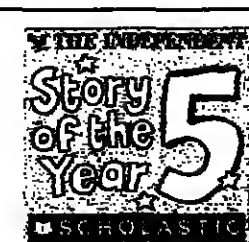
The Brimstone Wedding by Barbara Vine (Penguin, £5.99) The reader is swept along like a twig in a torrent by this account of two doomed love affairs separated by decades. Jenny, a superstitious care-assistant in an old people's home, is approaching the 13th year of a loveless marriage when she strikes up a rapport with Stella, a resident suffering from cancer. Bit by bit, Stella recalls the terrible events which freed her liver but destroyed their relationship. In her razor-sharp depictions of both character and milieu, Barbara Vine (alias Ruth Rendell) is utterly convincing.

Homeland by Barbara Kingsolver (Faber, £5.99) These shards of American home-life have attracted the swirling epithet "Chick-lit" from the *New York Times* but that is overstating the case. Many of Kingsolver's stories are akin to diary entries of a peculiarly traumatic nature – a car-crash, a near-drowning, an arrest on a picket-line – but they are strangely lacking in focus, despite her fine, laconic dialogue and eye for shabby detail. She writes with great tenderness about society's outsiders, but, laudable

though it is, this kind of material does not make for addictive page-turning.

Trust by Francis Fukuyama (Penguin, £12.50) Despite its daunting bulk and title, this is a stimulating read. Fukuyama's enlightened thesis is that "a healthy and dynamic civil society" – in other words "trust" between individuals and institutions – is vital for stable prosperity. Overly centralised states have trouble achieving this; so do those where any institution larger than the family is distrusted. The author cites the example of Wang Computers whose fortunes plummeted as a result of "hatant nepotism". This wide-ranging, lucid work is a welcome rebuttal to extremists of both right and left.

The Austrians by Gordon Brook-Shepherd (HarperCollins, £8.99) Britain's greatest expert on Mitteleuropa has condensed a lifetime's research into this history. Austria's imperial past is delineated at a cracking rate – from Charlemagne to Metternich in 60 pages. The pace slows for the momentous events of our own century in which this pocket-sized state played such an explosively



Can you write a winning short story for 6-9 year-old children?

Don't miss The Tabloid next Thursday for details of the 1997 Story of the Year competition. First prize is £2,000, with £500 for the two runners up – and to celebrate the competition's fifth birthday, we will be awarding a special trophy to all three. The winning

story will be published in the *Independent Magazine*, and the top 10 stories will appear in a specially commissioned anthology from Scholastic Children's Books. So sharpen those pencils – and find out on Thursday about another celebrity's bedtime stories.

catalytic role. Fortunately for all concerned, the last half-century has been remarkable for its lack of drama, though the author notes how the Waldheim scandal shattered Austria's complacent view of itself.

Howard Hughes: the untold story by Peter H Brown and Pat H Brookes (Warner, £7.99) Rich beyond belief, Hughes was once a formidable operator. But by 1951, his aides were issued with a "nine-

point programme for opening a tin of peaches." His harem of starlets had similar rules: no leg-shaving and no pork ("Howard hated to be in bed with women who had gas"). His celebrity lovers ranged from Ava Gardner to Kate Hepburn. Doubtless the "millions of dollarsworth of jewels he threw at their feet" helped them overlook any character defects. Despite the authors' assiduous research, the man remains a mystery – perhaps there is little to know.

A realistic rector's wife

Michael Arditti hears confessions of a cassock-ripper

The Benefits of Passion by Catherine Fox, Hamish Hamilton, £16

Far from encouraging feelings of dread, invitations to vicarage tea-parties in Gateshead must be highly prized – at least in the parish where Catherine Fox's husband is vicar. If she serves up the same mixture of wit, charm, perception and raunch in her sitting-room as she does in her prose, they must be the best parties in town.

Annie, the engaging heroine of her second novel, is a 30-something ordinand, scarred by her dour non-conformist background, training at an evangelical theological college in a thinly veiled Durham. Coverdale Hall could not be more different from the Anglo-Catholic bothouse of A N Wilson's *Unregarded Hours*, and Fox's first achievement is to sustain interest in a group of characters with such fundamentalist views.

The best (former midwife Muriel and 50-something Ted) are worthy but dull; the worst (ex-army officer Edward) is full of passionate intensity. Fox is excellent at capturing the stolid bigotry of Edward, a man for whom bible-bashing is little differ-

ent from square-bashing, who believes that imagination is a product of the Fall, and who uses the typical evangelical trick of substituting aliteration for logic, as when dividing *sermons into sections* such as "Prayer, Praise and Perseverance".

Annie is an alien in this world. While her study group discusses "God and Calling", she fantasises about having sex with an entire rugby team. Having been celibate for 11 years, her libido is panting at the leash. Indeed, she pictures it as Libby, a dog on heat (and Fox obtains much comic mileage when she finally takes it for a walk). She attempts to ease her frustrations by secretly writing cassock-ripping romantic fiction.

Her heroine, Isabella, has "all the directness Annie lacked". She is cat to Annie's mouse, and, in turn, she plays cat and mouse with a handsome ordinand she meets in Cambridge. Their crazy courtship has all the energy and excitement of a classic Hollywood comedy.

Fox handles the different fictional modes with great aplomb, showing the many uses to which Annie puts her writing. At times, she transmutes experience without realising, as when she meets a gynaecologist whom she has inadvertently used as the model for Barney. At others, she steals from her friends to give to her characters. At her most desperate, writing becomes a means of revenge, as when she decides to put a stun-

ning-looking hostess in her next book "and give her peptic ulcers".

The fictional parallels become more complex once Annie meets Will, a doctor-friend of Edward's, and behaves with a passion that was previously the preserve of Isabella. An ordinand to her finger-tips, she is racked by guilt. She even prays that the Second Coming will occur to prevent their sleeping together.

The Benefits of Passion is a delightful novel: funny, life-enhancing and humane. Its faults lie in a certain lack of weight: for all Annie's doubts, there is no serious theological debate; nor any real sense of the darkness that must be the testing-ground of faith. Some of the men come straight from stock. Will and Barney, in particular, are little more than dashing bunks.

Knowing nothing of Catherine Fox but her press release, it is impossible not to identify her, in part, with her fiction. One scene, where Isabella, now married to a curate, serves an obscenely shaped *boeuf Wellington* to a bishop and his wife, only makes sense if Fox is showing the same propensity for fictional revenge as her central character. But who cares, when it is the funniest meal graced by an episcopal personage since Stephen Fry's *The Hippopotamus*? Above all, she displays a genuine ability to make religion palatable for a secular age. Forget *The Rector's Wife*; this is the real thing.

travel & outdoors

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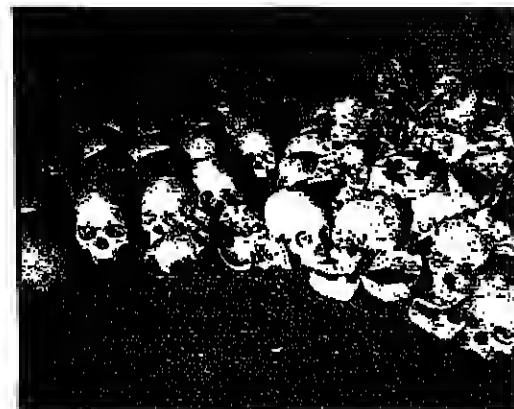


Uganda spills on to Lake Victoria in the form of the Sese archipelago of 84 islands. Reminders of Amin's brutality are never far away, below

PHOTOGRAPH: PANOS/HOLMES, S THOMAS

In the wake of Idi Amin

The legacy of the reign of terror keeps Uganda off the tourist map. But for those who make the journey, the islands that pepper Lake Victoria provide a dizzying array of all that Africa has to offer ... including its dangers, as Anna Borzello found



Although Kalangala, the administrative centre of the Sese islands, is less than 60 miles from Kampala, it took us eight dangerous hours to get there. Four times, the 20 passengers had to clamber out of the back of the pick-up to lighten the load, leaving only the sacks of grain, branches of *matooke* (unsweet bananas, a staple of south Uganda) and a frail old woman clutching on to the edge of a coffin for support.

Just before reaching the ferry stage, the vehicle stopped next to a rundown house where, on the grass beside it, a group of women were crying. Then the coffin was lifted over the passengers' heads and off the pick-up, whereupon the women began ritually wailing and clapping their hair.

"The man they are crying for fell out of this pick-up yesterday," explained the schoolboy crushed against my knees. Sese, an archipelago of 84 islands in the Ugandan waters of Lake Victoria, has only 16,000 inhabitants, and is one of the less-visited circuits for independent travellers although Lonely Planet included it in the third edition of its guide to East Africa in 1994.

Uganda, which still suffers from its association with the long-gone dictator Idi Amin, attracts few travellers. Sese, by virtue of its inaccessibility, gets even fewer. In Kalangala police station - a settlement of tin huts, loose chickens and courteous officers - the visitors' book in which all tourists must register, flicks back to 1992 in a few pages.

Kalangala, on Bugali Island, is a tiny settlement, its buildings spread sparsely along the dirt-red road which overlooks the

lake and offshore islands. There is not much action, except for the TV set. At night, benches are set up outside a shop and a vocal audience gathers to watch *That's Life Mwatu*, a popular Ugandan soap.

Most visitors stay about five days, rowing on the lake, walking through vervet-filled forests, or cycling along the quiet lanes. Paths pass through poor mud-and-thatch villages, and the islanders greet visitors politely. Tourists are still rare enough to have had little impact on the lifestyle of the islanders and only a tiny handful have tried to capitalise on tourists as a source of income.

One of these is Mr P T Andronico - the heart of Sese's tiny tourist industry, and now, since his oddities were mentioned by Lonely Planet, an attraction in himself. This eccentric 70-year-old islander, with his luminous green Wellington boots and gasping, eager speech, has a manic urge to label everything in his tourist lodge as if he is trying to teach its inhabitants to read.

Outside the lodge, clouded by a noisy tree drooping with the weight of hundreds of yellow weaver birds, is a sign for a car park - a misnomer given that there are few cars on the island, none of which belong to Mr Andronico.

Instead, the tiny shack houses rickety bicycles which are hired out with a map indicating the major landmarks in Mr Andronico's life: the school where he taught; the improbable parish church - perfectly Victorian except for its corrugated-iron roof - where he funded the latrines; the village where he was born.

In front of Mr Andronico's lodge is a dustbin, helpfully labelled "bin". Inside

the labels proliferate and even the plant pot is labelled "plant". My bedroom, with its animal skin, religious artefacts and house rules ("No wrong sex"), felt as if a mad old lady had recently died in it.

Mr Andronico's full creativity, however, is let loose on the dining room walls, where his personal history and political prejudices flourish freely. Ex-presidents Idi Amin and Milton Obote are there, the phrase "killer murderer" inked beneath them. The current president of nine years, Yoweri Museveni, fares better. His annotation: "Peace Bringer".

There is no doubt, judging by the curling picture of the Kabaka, the Buganda king reinstated by Museveni two years ago, that Mr Andronico is a fervent

Muganda - the central Ugandan tribe which has historically dominated the economic and intellectual life of the country.

Underneath these pictures, the evening meal (plates of groundnut sauce, fish stew and sweet bananas) is eaten with Mr Andronico, his son and interested townspeople. In our case this included a local journalist who came every evening to share "hot tips". He seemed eager for company, not surprising given that there are few young people in Sese. Most children go to the mainland for school, and by the time they are educated there is little point in coming back.

Sese is usually fairly empty. The police came to tell us when another traveller arrived, and the only other tourists we met

were a Danish couple *en route* in Tanzania to demonstrate Tanzanian dances to the "local people". The hostel is rarely full.

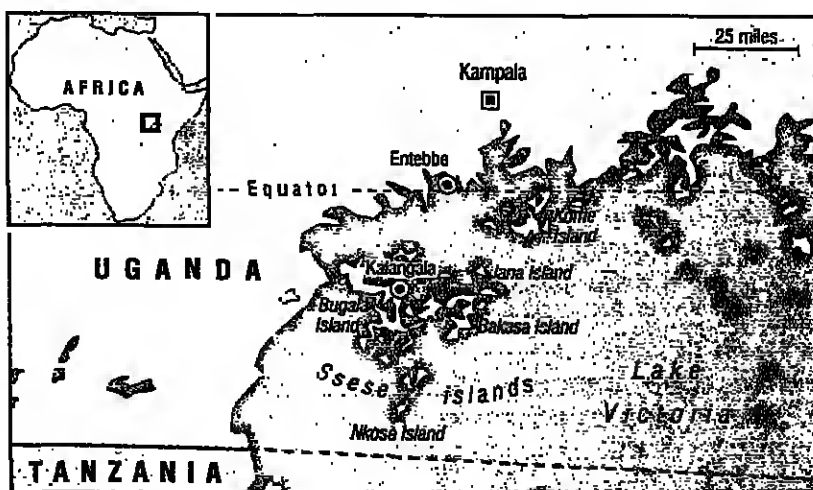
Few Ugandans travel to Sese. This is not simply because there is little domestic tourism in Uganda, a country with a per capita income of £150 per month and only a tiny middle class who prefer to "travel out" for their holidays, but because Ugandans, most of whom can't swim, are terrified of the lake.

Their terror is justified. On the return journey, four hours by fishing boat rather than the more roundabout road-and-ferry route, many of the regular commuters, aware that an overloaded boat had sunk that weekend, packed orange life jackets in their briefcases. Passengers were carried one by

one through muddy, thigh-deep water, dense with hyacinths, to a sun-bleached fishing boat beaped with dead and dying fish.

The journey, rocking under a clear and burning sky, was broken only when a boat drew alongside and threw more fish inside. Large sacks of mukete, the small dried fish which forms the livelihood for many of the islanders and whose dead-bippo-like smell pervades Bugala Island, were also heaved on board.

I steadied my eyes on the horizon, while the young policeman next to me - who was returning to Kampala after a nine-month stint in what he regarded as the lifeless pit of Sese (no discos and only five murders since the New Year) - was discreetly sick over the side.



Victoria principles

Getting there: Competition is increasing on flights between Britain and Uganda. Alliance Air (book direct on 0171-312 5040) flies nonstop on Mondays and Fridays between Heathrow and Entebbe; Alliance is an offshoot of South African Airways (and uses an old SAA 747). The lowest fare is £440 return including tax, but this must be booked by 3pm today; after that, the fare rises by £20. British Airways (0345 222111) flies twice a week from Gatwick via Nairobi. Its lowest official fare is around £700, but discounted tickets costing £400 are available through agents

such as Somak Travel (0181-903 8526) for travel by the end of March. British visitors no longer need a tourist visa for Uganda.

Accommodation: The government-run Uganda Hotel Corporation operates a network of comfortable lodges. Prices are around £25 single/£40 double per night, including tea and toast. Further information: Philip Briggs's *Guide to Uganda* (Bradt Publications, £11.95); *East Africa: a Travel Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet, £11.95). The Ugandan High Commission is at 58 Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DX (0171-839 5783).

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"Your request for ridiculous holiday injury tales," writes Peter Roberts of North Yorkshire, "prompts me to recount the following episode during a journey to Poland in January 1993."

"At the time, Lufthansa offered an attractive deal on flights into Germany, so I flew to Berlin and took the overnight train to Warsaw. Distracted by the romantic prospect of sleeping on a train while I travelled through darkened foreign countryside (not to mention several beers consumed in a bar opposite the station), I bedded down on the top couchette of an otherwise empty three-decker compartment.

"At around midnight, I was wrenched from sleep by the clatter of the door being cast aside and a barked 'Passport! Hazy and confused, not to say scared



Simon Calder

by the uniform, peaked cap and holstered gun standing in the doorway. I rolled over and swung down.

"In my haste to please the man with the gun, I forgot that the top level in a three-decker is a long way from the floor. The effect of dropping my full weight on to my forearms was the dislocation of my right shoulder.

Dressed decadently in only a pair of boxer shorts, I lay on the floor writhing in pain.

"This made no impact at all on the spook. Evidently the state communist culture was unchanged. 'Passport!' he kept repeating. Perhaps it was the only word his rules of engagement allowed him.

"I struggled to my feet and reached up for my bag. As I did so, I felt the shoulder crunch back into place. The officer inspected every page of my passport while casting glances at my grimaced features, perhaps reading guilt there instead of pain. Finally, without a word, he handed my passport back and moved on. Not a trace of human warmth illuminated the shadow under the peak throughout this exchange. I travelled on, with the shoulder back in working order but painful for weeks afterwards."

This may be what is meant by the intermediate term between peak and low travel periods: shoulder season.

British Airways offer this week of New York on Concorde for £10 return was not quite as generous as it sounded. If you were lucky enough to be among the one-in-150,000 of telephone applicants for a cheap seat on the supersonic jet, you will know by now that the tax payable on the offer was more than double the fare.

William Read of Stafford expands on "the inequity of 'tax exclusive' prices in flight advertisements". Mr Read says he took the practice up with the Advertising Standards Authority and "managed to obtain a successful complaint against a leading airline's use of all taxes - 'on the same basis as other products and services sold in this country'."

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something to declare



Carried on up the jungle?

True or false: an expedition is just a credit card away? True, at least according to the new Royal Geographic Society Tours – an association between the society and five tour operators, announced this week. But it begs the question: what is an expedition? When you're on a luxury cruise and the only special equipment you need is a pair of sunglasses? Call me old fashioned, but if I went on an expedition I'd expect to come back with more intrepid yams than how I learnt to fox-trot in the Pacific or how I got my hair damp being ferried ashore in a Zodiac in Antarctica.

The society has been internationally renowned for supporting adventurers since the early 19th century. But the new RGS Tours – involving five operators – which promote the value and enjoyment of geography – look as if they are mainly suited to those who fancy being explorers without having to do any exercise, be the slightest bit uncomfortable or suffer an injury that can't be cured with the stretch of an Elastoplast.

The RGS operators include Noble Caledonia and Orient Lines (both luxury "expedition" cruise ship operators), Abercrombie & Kent and Wildlife World-wide (both offering luxury wildlife tours) and Adrift (which specialises in whitewater rafting trips). In terms of

adventure, Adrift clients are the only ones who battle with the elements (the company has recently pioneered the first ever descent of the Victoria Nile in Uganda), although you don't actually have to be able to swim.

But the RGS also insists the operators are chosen for their understanding of sustainable tourism issues. Cruise-ship waste controls prevent the polar regions being adulterated by caviar tins. All operators talk briefly about respecting the fragile environments they visit. And A&K donates part of your fee to wildlife charity Friends of Conservation. But only Adrift gives a really thorough account of how they have planned their holidays with the local communities and environments in mind.

Environmental tourism, as anyone who has attended an RGS "sustainable tourism" conference will tell you, is not just about appreciating wildlife and recycling. Invariably, the main problem local communities face is the fact that they get only the financial crumbs from tourism and have little say over its development, yet bear the environmental and social costs.

Sue Wheat

RGS Tours, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR (0171-591 3157)

Bargain of the week

The present series of Britannia charters to Australia and New Zealand operated by Austravel (0171-734 7755) represents good value, but the flights tend to be longer and more cramped than scheduled services, and the programme finishes in March. From today, Austravel is selling "charter out/scheduled home" flights to Australian and New

Zealand destinations. You travel there on Britannia, and back on Cathay Pacific, Malaysia Airlines or Singapore Airlines – with the option to stop at their "home ports" of Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur or Singapore. The fare to Sydney is £628 return, and to Auckland £612. You must travel out by the end of March and return by the end of June.



For three days every year, the Swiss step out of character, into costume and go totally out to lunch for the 'Fasnacht' carnival in Basle

PHOTOGRAPH BY AP

Masked Basle

With the unerring accuracy of a Swiss watch, 'Fasnacht' festivities start at 4am on the first Monday of Lent. By Mark Dudley

On Tuesday evening it was a relief to lean against the granite wall of the 90-year-old Mittere Brücke and detach myself from the crowds. Hoards of people were still teeming the confetti-covered Greifengasse in Basle. Lights from the island, flat Johanniterbrücke highlighted the ripples of the wide, inky-black Rhine. Spotlights illuminated the magnificent twin Gothic towers of the cathedral, nestled high on the southern bank of the river.

After the noise and hustle, there was a strangely calm interval. It was short lived.

A 50-piece band, dressed as elephants and kitted out with drums, trumpets, trombones, tubas and much more, marched past playing "Happy Days are Here Again". I took the plunge once more and joined the crowd following respectfully behind.

This was Basle's Fasnacht – a spectacular three-day extravaganza that starts on the first Monday of Lent. It takes

months of hard work by more than 12,000 people for the proceedings to get underway. With the unerring accuracy of a Swiss clock, it kicks off at 4am with the Morgestraich (or "morning stroke") in Marktplatz. Hundreds of faces poke out from their padded jackets as the lights of the city are extinguished and the air becomes filled with the resonant sound of piccolos and drums. Then, in what seems like a bizarre hallucinatory experience, the pre-dawn gloom is illuminated by

the glow from intricate, hand-painted lanterns while a sea of grotesque costumed and masked figures march along, all covered from head to foot so it is impossible to tell their gender.

More than 100 groups, or Cliquen – each containing between 25 and 200 members – make up the opening parade. By dawn this has amassed to a lot. An awful lot. And the music throughout the festival is in equal abundance because, in true Swiss style, it never seems

to stop. From morning to night you come across unexpected costumed figures playing music on nearly every street corner.

After the opening parade, there is a morning break. Then the same Cliquen perform in the Strassenfasnacht, and a host of smaller processions wind their way along the official route in two directions – through the old and new town – by crossing the Rhine on the Mittere Brücke and Wettsteinbrücke. Confetti, oranges, sweets and mimosa are thrown abundantly to the crowds.

Every float represents a theme from the year. These ideas originally had to be formerly approved by the ruling Komitee, the organisers who disallow anything lewd or sexual. Mad cows and big-eared royals were two of the more English themes, though there were scores more. And it seemed that wherever I went there were groups of costumed pipers and drummers and, of course, loud, foot-stompin' Guggenmusik bands.

The like of which I was now following into Grossbasle and the old part of town – an area home to Basle's healthy collection of historical and cultural monuments. These include the imposing 14th-century Spalentor (the former gate to the city), the Kunstmuseum with its wide selection of German paintings, the red-brick 16th-century town hall in Marktplatz, and the Historisches Museum (set in a 14th-century Franciscan church and outside of which the Guggenmusik bands would give concerts this very evening).

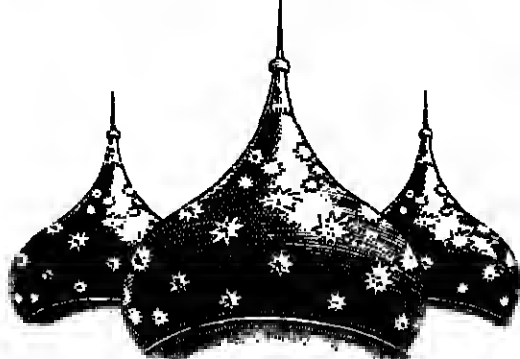
A layer of confetti covered the ground like a hefty fall of snow. Then, when the band started to play "When I'm 64" with a jaunty beat initiated by the trumpets, fired by the drums and beamed up by the tubas, I branched left up the narrow, cobbled Rheinsprung strasse, an ancient street lined with charming houses. However, I was slowed by a small group of people who followed a lone drummer dressed in the powdered wig and flared skirt of the mid-18th century. Gradually he led us into Munsterplatz.

Dominated by the red sandstone Gothic cathedral (its construction stretched over many centuries and records date back to 916 when it was initially a church), the square displayed more than 50 of the Cliquen's lanterns. Hand-painted by professional artists, they depicted the Cliquen's theme for the year. I browsed in the peaceful surrounds, dallying between having a bratwurst and Warteck beer from one of the stalls or a drink in the warmth of the coffee shop opposite. And then I heard the oom-pah beat of "I'm in the Money", which reminded me I was skint, so I wandered off to watch the Guggenmusik concert in Barfüsserplatz instead.

British visitors this Lent may not realise their good fortune, but the pound is stronger against the Swiss franc than it has been for four years. But if you refuse to accept that 5 francs (£2.15) for a coffee is a bargain, just make the most of these free and fantastical festivities.

has rail services from London Waterloo via Little or Paris, taking about 11 hours, for £171. Bookings: British Rail International (0171-834 2345). More information: Switzerland Tourism, Swiss Centre, New Coventry Street, London W1V 8EE (0171-734 1921), open 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

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War and piste ...

Now the bullets have stopped flying, Lebanon's sun, surf, snow and Phoenician ruins are becoming a tourist draw. Stephen Wood reports

Nobody knows when the snow will fall. And nobody can say exactly when Ramadan will end. The first big snowfalls on Mount Lebanon were expected in December, but they didn't come until the beginning of last week. Ramadan is more reliable than that: the month-long Muslim fast ends when the first sighting of the new moon has been officially confirmed in Mecca. Everyone who needed to know was aware that Fitr, the three-day holiday at the end of the fast, would probably start last weekend. Everyone, that is, except me.

I had long wanted to go skiing in Lebanon. Partly because it seemed a loopy idea, partly because the country's main resort, Faraya-Mzaar, is only about 25km from the Mediterranean, meaning that you can ski and swim on the same day, and partly because I love Lebanese food. The special offer on Middle East Airlines flights to Beirut – cut to £250 including taxes for departures in February – provided an irresistible opportunity. I did check that there was snow at Faraya-Mzaar before booking my ticket. But I didn't inquire about national holidays. If I had, I would not only have found out about Fitr but also about last Sunday's feast day for the patron saint of the other

major religious group in Lebanon, the Maronite Christians.

Travelling to the Lebanon for a skiing trip last weekend was as wise as going for a quiet stroll in Pamplona on the day of the Bull Run. The whole country was on holiday. And the Lebanese who had been waiting months for the chance to go skiing were all heading for the slopes.

According to the guidebooks, Faraya-Mzaar is an hour's drive from Beirut. Not last Friday afternoon it wasn't. The journey took me three-and-a-half hours – most of that time spent edging out of Beirut in a traffic jam of epic proportions. When I finally arrived at Faraya-Mzaar, it was full, of course. But the resort's director took pity on me, and put me up in the basement beneath his office, with the chef from the restaurant at the foot of the ski lifts as my flatmate.

The following morning I was woken by the rumble of Range Rovers and Jeep Cherokees as wealthy Beirut headed up the hill for the season's first skiing weekend. I followed them, and took two chairlifts from the 1,850m base to the Dôme Jibal Dih at 2,296m. A gentle blue train led me to the chair-lift up to the Dôme du Mzaar, the top of the resort at 2,465m.

The snow was superb – a metre had fallen early in the week – but the views

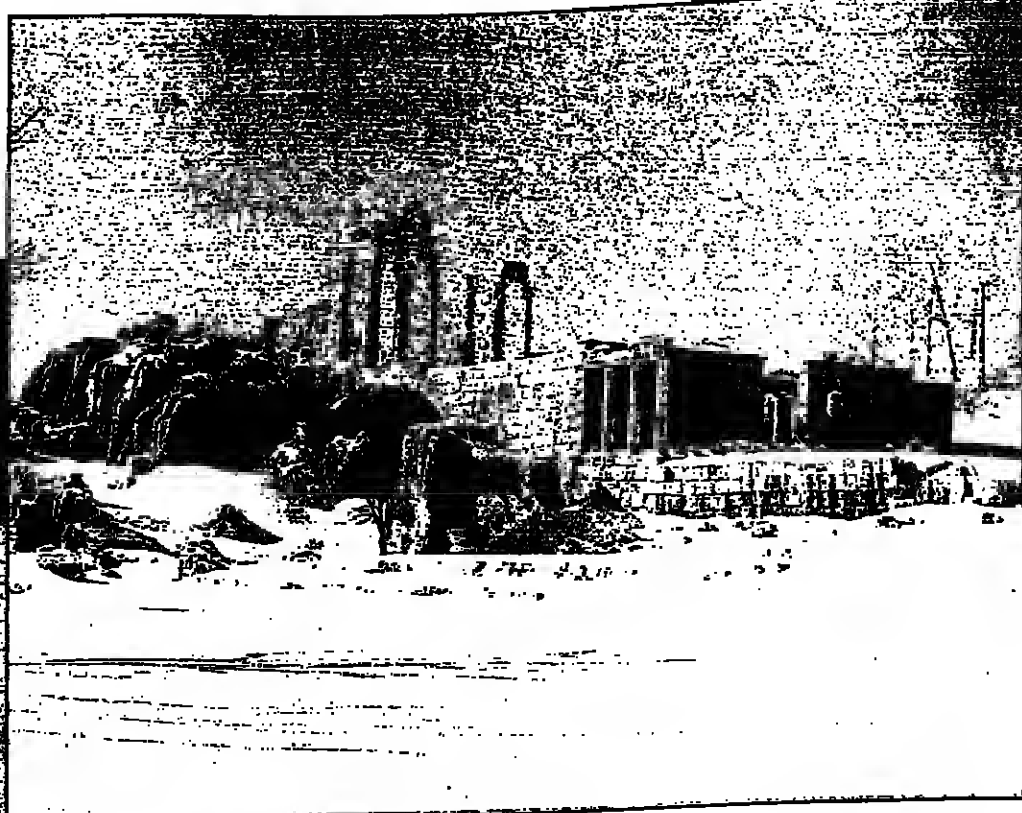


Faraya-Mzaar: pleasant but unchallenging skiing – and terrific views
PHOTOGRAPH: STEPHEN WOOD

were even better. On a clear day, the brochure promised, you can see Beirut jutting out into the sea; this was a crystal clear day, and from the two peaks I could see almost the whole of Lebanon (which is only half the size of Wales), from Mount Hermon in the south to the Tripoli coastline in the north, and inland

to the mountains on the other side of the Bekaa Valley.

By Alpine standards, Faraya-Mzaar is a very small resort, with pleasant but unchallenging skiing. For US\$26 a day at weekends (ski and boot hire cost US\$6.50) the ski-pass gives access to 12 main pistes serviced by eight lifts; six of



The Phoenician ruins at Faqra

PHOTOGRAPH: STEPHEN WOOD

them are easy runs, and there are two blacks. Even the off-piste area ("between-piste" would be more accurate) is suitable for intermediates. The outcrops were the most difficult: the high proportion of beginners in the bank holiday crowd made it hard work to pick your way through the accidents that were about to happen, and those that already had. By mid-morning, the queue at the bottom of the lifts was 25 minutes long; by late afternoon, the resort estimated that 4,500 people had been on the slopes; by the evening the exhausted chef (he had processed 1,300 orders during the day) added another 1,000 to the estimate.

Near Faraya-Mzaar is another of Lebanon's handful of resorts, the much quieter Faqra. It has the unusual attraction (for a ski resort) of extensive ancient ruins – and the Phoenician temple turned out to be a lot more interesting than the skiing. Faqra is quiet because it is a private club, where only the villa owners normally have access to the slope, but a letter of introduction from the Ministry of Tourism saw me past the gatepost and into the set for a high-altitude Lebanese Dallas, where even the Cadillac wear chains – steel snow-chains rather than the gold ones hanging off most of the residents.

The ski area made Faraya-Mzaar seem huge. No piste map was available. I was told, since what could be seen from the bottom – a sort of extended nursery slope – was all the skiing there was. Rather than putting on my skis, I headed back down to the coast. I had hoped to visit Lebanon's oldest resort, The Cedars, but the main road was still full of bank holiday traffic, and I wasn't confident that I had time for a "three-hour" journey. So I went down to the sea instead.

You can ski and swim on the same day in the Lebanon. But despite the beautifully warm weather, the Mediterranean was chilly, so I contented myself with paddling. I'd never paddled in thermal underwear before: I recommend it. And the Lebanese food? The menus in the resorts were disappointingly international, but I'm not stupid – I didn't share my evenings in Faraya-Mzaar with a chef without asking a few pertinent questions. He directed me to the Joudna restaurant on Beit Meri, one of the hills overlooking Beirut. For an exquisite Lebanese meal (in surroundings like a mock-baronial Beverly Hills folly), I can recommend Joudna. And after lunch, relieved to be a pedestrian again, I took a stroll – all the way across Beirut. If you are looking for the experience of a lifetime, I recommend that.

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Battle off the slopes

Take a bunch of strangers, one chalet ... and stir.
By Max Flint



"Life is fragile. You learn that in my line of work." Please, just eat your potatoes and shut up. "Why did you serve the Bordeaux before the Merlot? You should of done it the other way round."

I was learning a lot from Pete, a fellow ski chalet guest. He couldn't stop. Every mouthful brought another observation from "my line of work" - this being the police force.

"I just don't see the point of marriage: I dunno why you bothered," he told the married end of the table.

"Now pass the wine before you lot finish the red. We haven't had any up here."

This was my first attempt at skiing and my first chalet. Keeping my temper was as tough as keep-

ing my skis pointing in the same direction.

So, Courchevel in the French Alps. Tick, tick, tick in the "good" boxes. Great food, comfortable rooms, friendly staff. Everything worked - except chalet etiquette.

Why comments on the coach matured into polite confrontation in the chalet, then downright aggression at the dinner table. The divide reminded me of school trips to youth hostels, except here nobody could tell us to behave like adults.

I tried, I promise you I tried, but by day two "our side" of the dinner table was finching at everything he said. By day three we were recruiting members to our anti-Pete cause as fast as he turned off our choice of background music.

"I've got a word to describe

that," he said of my choice of tape. "But I can't use it in front of the girls. Del Amitri, Simple Minds. That's what we should be listening to. Top Bands."

Dawn broke on beautiful day four, and his room was too cramped, the bed made him ache and the wine was too common for his sophisticated palate.

Sue kissed the mountains on day five and over dinner we had the chance to hear how bodies decompose at crime scenes. Oh, and we had more roast potatoes than "his" side (now poorly organised into a wine militia led by him with his partner as sole recruit).

A cloudy day six and I could snowplough and parallel turn to the left but not the right. He, however, spent the day "going above the cloud" to escape learner-skiers who were, quite frankly,

ruining his holiday. His militia now demanded their own supply of Merlot to be deposited at 8.15pm next to his glass.

The evening brought our worst battle. He learnt one of our number owned a boat and quickly became Professor Nauticus, self-taught in seven seconds using the Complete Know-All Guide to Sailing. It meant the poor man who was a professional wine-buyer was left to breathe, but at the expense of our lone sailor going down with the gravy boat.

We retaliated. We kept all the carrots, potatoes and remaining wine down our end of the long table. He demanded some red, our team leader Sally filled her glass to the brim and passed him an empty bottle.

He snorted and complained that Sally's after-dinner cigarette

(as yet unlit) made it impossible for his partner to breathe, so he opened all the windows to let in a refreshing -12 degrees breeze. We stormed out to the pub, leaving dessert unguarded and totally at his mercy.

"What's this? Where's the fruit? I don't like ice cream! The other chalets have better desserts..." The moan died as we left.

Day seven and time to head home. In strict groups. Confused chalet guides watched as each group sat at the other end of the coach, the airport lounge and then the plane. Baggage handlers at Gatwick forced us briefly together, to mingle with civil intent. He pushed our luggage so we kicked his before running to the Gatwick Express. How childish, but we felt we had won.

The late snow

The ski season started not with a bang, but with a dump: more snow fell in November and December 1996 than in the whole of the previous season. But while pre-Christmas snowfalls of up to five metres had resorts rushing to open their chairlifts early, January failed to add to this early promise and there was little fresh powder on any resorts in Europe.

According to weather forecasters, this is about to change, and up to two metres of fresh snow is expected to fall across most European ski resorts in the next few days. David Hearn from the Ski Club of Great Britain is certainly hopeful that "this long-awaited snowfall will result in excellent on- and off-piste conditions."

He adds that this should be particularly beneficial in Austria and Bulgaria, where the skiing has been limited so far this season. So it would seem this is an excellent time to capitalise on late-availability skiing holidays - but it would be a good idea to check conditions at individual resorts before you book. Below is a selection of offers, all prices are per person for seven nights. Thomson Ski prices are based on four people sharing.

France
21 February, Brides Les Bains, Neilsen Ski, Apt. £299 (Eurostar)
22 February, Avoriaz, Thomson Ski, Apt. £310 (from Birmingham)
22 February, Courchevel, Le Ski, Chalet, £399 (from Gatwick)
23 February, Chamonix, Ski Esprit, Chalet, £412 (from Gatwick)
23 February, Morzine, Ski Esprit, Chalet, £298 (from Gatwick)
23 February, Verbier, Ski Esprit, Chalet, £340 (from Gatwick)
28 February, Tignes, Neilsen Ski, Chalet, £509 (Eurostar)
1 March, Valmorel, Neilsen Ski, Apt. £329 (from Gatwick)
1 March, Flaine, Neilsen Ski, Apt. £269 (from Glasgow)
1 March, Courchevel, Le Ski, Chalet, £399 (from Manchester)

Crystal Ski's late-availability deals in France include: 22 February, flights from a range of regional airports) plus self-catering chalet for four people - £199 per person. A resort is allocated on arrival.

but can be specified for a supplement. At present resorts are Les Arcs, La Plagne, Val d'Isère, Tignes and Val Thorens.

A range of "accommodation and ferry" holidays in the French Alps is available through Motours. For example, a studio for four people from 1 March in Meribel costs £565.

Italy
16 February, Neilsen Ski, Macuganga, Hotel, £269 (from Glasgow)
23 February, First Choice Ski, Chiesa, Hotel, £299 (from Manchester)
1 March, Thomson Ski, Livigno, Apt. £327 (from Manchester)

Austria
22 February, Niederau, Neilsen Ski, Hotel, £369 (from Gatwick)
1 March, Kirchberg, Neilsen Ski, Hotel, £419 (from Manchester and Birmingham)

Bulgaria
9 March, Pamporovo, First Choice Ski, Hotel, £329 (from Gatwick)
9 March, Borovets, Neilsen Ski, Hotel, £259 (from Gatwick)

Spain
9 March, Sierra Nevada, Neilsen Ski, Hotel, £369 (from Manchester)

Andorra
2 March, Pas de la Casa, First Choice Ski, Apt. self-drive, £119

It is worth asking about ferry prices, lift passes and car hire, since many companies are offering deals. Ski Esprit, for example, is offering half-price for children on the prices quoted above.

If none of that tempts you, First Choice Ski currently has a package for a full week in Banff, Canada: seven nights' hotel accommodation and flights from Manchester departing on 20 February for £389.

Crystal Ski 0181-399 5144; First Choice 0990 557 755; Le Ski 01-484 548 996; Motours 01892 318555; Neilsen Ski 0990 944444; Ski Esprit 01252 616789; Thomson 0990 329 329

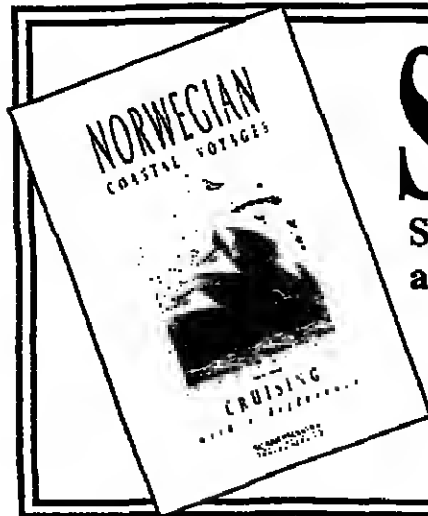
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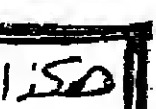
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The urge to have a go is irresistible

Jill Colchester and her sons spend a day at the Bristol Exploratory



Kito and Merry Colchester play 3D noughts-and-crosses at the Bristol Exploratory

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER JONES

Puzzle over optical illusions, play with electricity, experiment with chemistry or walk into infinity with the help of a mirror. The Bristol Exploratory was Britain's first hands-on science centre – and the urge to have a go is still almost irresistible. The huge variety of exhibits (known here as "pores" because you explore them) could keep you here for days. Everything is made on site, clearly explained and easy to operate.

The Exploratory is constantly changing as exhibits are improved and new ones added. It occupies two floors of the magnificent Temple Meads Old Station, one of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's most impressive structures. Each exhibit demands a physical relationship to make it work – not just pushing buttons on computer displays – so children and adults learn through experience rather than having to remember what they have seen on yet another screen.

If you had ever wondered what causes a tornado, why the Clifton suspension bridge stays up, or how geologists find out about the composition of rock, this is the place to be – an educational adventure playground.

The Visitors
Jill Colchester, dance teacher, took her sons Kito, 11, and Merry, 8.

Jill: The Exploratory had a very good ambience and was visually very exciting – from the smart black-and-red entrance to the exhibits themselves. As we walked in, there was the lovely sound of children enjoying themselves. It felt spacious, so there was no desperate rush to get on something immediately. The layout was excellent. I liked the way the space was split into areas dealing with different topics like light, electricity and chemistry. The effect of going from the somewhat darkened room on the ground floor to the naturally lit upper floor was startling.

I think it is valuable that the children felt so much a part of everything. Most of the exhibits relied on you doing something to them but there were a few unexpected things like the colour maze which just required you to think about it. I also thought the Stradivarius sound room was a nice surprise.

The children spent a short time on each thing, being lured by the one next door

before long. But they could have got more involved if they had wanted. Kito reckoned we needed at least three hours there to get round everything.

He enjoyed it immensely. Merry was at a disadvantage because he has difficulty reading. He had to work out what to do by doing it. I think as the place is geared towards children of primary-school age more pictorial instructions would have been useful.

Merry: The Exploratory was really good. There were loads of things to do and although there were lots of people we didn't have to queue for anything. The best thing was the really long tube which you talked down and it echoed back. I also made everything work on pedal power – the train, the beacon light, the television, everything. The air canon was good. I hit one end and it sent a puff of air quite a long way to a target and if you stood in front of it you got hit.

Downstairs was quite dark and you had to read more to understand what to do. The things upstairs were much easier to understand just by looking at them. I enjoyed the

music room where we played with something that made sound louder or softer.

Kito: I have always been interested in science so I love these sorts of places but I think this is a great place for everyone. There were never-ending things to do, lots to read and lots to learn but nearly everything was hands on.

I really liked the electricity section. There was a plasma tube which you put your hands on either side and it made a green band go from one hand to the other showing the current go across it. I was very interested in the display about artificial lighting. Pedal Power was good. It was interesting to see how much power is needed to run a television or a radio compared to a light bulb.

I failed to make an arch upstairs because it kept falling down – but I did make a nice picture with the Harmonograph and got good echoes out of the echo tube. I also liked the 3D noughts-and-crosses. There was a good exhibition on water where they explained how they cleaned water which I found very interesting.

The Deal
Bristol Exploratory, Bristol Old Station, Temple Meads, Bristol, BS1 6QU (0117 907 8000).

Opening Times: daily from 10am-5pm. Closed for one week over Christmas.

Admission: adults, £5; children (5-17), £3.50; family ticket, £15.

Access: the Exploratory is two minutes' walk from Bristol Temple Meads station which connects with local services and the Intercity network. By car it is well sign-posted from the city centre. It lies on many bus routes: nos 8 & 9 connect from the city centre.

Food: a small museum café serves snacks and light lunches geared for children: jacket potatoes from £2.50; pizza, £1.60; beans on toast £1. Open school holidays and weekends only. Alternatively bring your own packed lunch to eat in the designated area.

Cloakroom & toilets: no supervised cloakroom. Coats can be left at your own risk on the ground floor by the toilets. There is a disabled toilet and baby changing facilities.

Catherine Stebbings

Are we nearly there?

A round up of half-term ideas for kids

Craft workshops at the Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Road, London E2 (0171-739 9893) 18-21 February, Tues-Sat 10.30am-12.45 and 2-4pm, Sun pm only. Children can take part in textile design, metalwork and paper-making. On 21 February three- to five-year-olds will have an opportunity to make coloured window lights. All activities are free.

Reliving history at Warwick Castle, Warwick, (01926 406600) 15-23 February, daily 10am-5pm. Visitors will be swept back to medieval times during six daily performances. The 14th-century Great Hall provides a magnificent backdrop to the reconstructions of hand combat, while in the castle's armoury visitors can handle heavy swords and try on armour for themselves. Admission is £8.75 for adults and £5.25 for children.

DinoMites, Croydon Clock Tower, Katherine Street, Croydon (0181-253 1030) Mon-Sat 11am-5am, Sun 12-5pm. An exhibition aimed at kids of 12 and under which takes visitors on an educational journey through the early years of dinosaurs. There's a quiz sheet available, and other activities invite children to make their own dinosaur landscapes, create clay models of fossils, and play archaeological and excavation games. Admission £3 standard/£2 concessions, under-fours are free.

Old Father Time at the Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, London W1 (0171-935 0687) 19 February, 10.30am-12.15. An activity session which explores the meaning of allegory through representations of Old Father Time and other figures in the collection. The event is suitable for six- to 12-year-olds. Admission £2, booking essential.

Star Trek, the Gas Hall, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham (0121 235 1966), daily 10am-5pm. As well as original costumes, props and sets from the *Star Trek* TV series and feature films there are videos featuring Captains Kirk and Picard, Commander Sisko and other members of the crew. There is a particular emphasis on the idea that *Star Trek* has always been based on scientific fact, and visitors can see how some once futuristic screen gadgets, such as the portable phone and automatic translator, have become a reality. Admission £3.95, concessions £3, family ticket £12.50.

The Happiest Days of Your Life? Ordsall Hall Museum, Taylorson Street, Salford (0161 872 0251) Mon-Fri 10am-12.30, 1.30-5pm, Sun 2-5pm. An exhibition about school life since Victorian times which may well cause children to think more fondly of their own modern schools. The exhibition covers subjects such as classroom routines, equipment, discipline and dress. On the more light-hearted front there is a "Tric Stories Blackboard" which encourages people to confess to any school pranks they may have got away with. Free.

The Met Office Weather Gallery, The Beacon, Whitehaven (01946 592 302) Tues-Sun 10am-4.30pm. The gallery aims to raise awareness in youngsters about issues such as global warming. It also offers do-it-yourself TV weather forecasting and a weather machine that explains how various weather processes work. Admission £3.30 adults, £2.75 OAPs, £2.10 children, students and unemployed.

Abigail Rayner

In search of the perfect family break

Conferences are squeezing children out of hotels, writes Deborah Jackson

I was once sent to try out an award-winning family hotel on the south coast. On arrival, we discovered that our three children were the only small children staying at the grand Victorian establishment that weekend. Yet the hotel was nearly full – with conference parties. As I struggled with my noisy toddler along the corridors, I felt sorry for delegates trying to concentrate on their flip charts.

Further investigation revealed that £1m of refurbishments favoured corporate, rather than junior, interests. The pool had been redesigned to allow the construction of extra conference rooms, which meant parents could no longer watch their children from the open-plan bar. A bigger gym had been built where the children's playground used to be – the new playground was small and dark and out of bounds to over-sevens.

I put it to Nigel Edmund-

Jones – editor of the 1996 family guide *And Children Come Too* – that hotel loyalty is distressingly split between family and conference interests. "You've hit the nail on the head," he said. "This is what English hotels are like. The problem is that not enough families go to England for their holidays, and hotels end up with casual visitors and conference delegates."

Some chain hotels are even filling in their swimming pools to make space for more long tables and overhead projectors. Since children are barred from many country house hotels, sneered at in middle-range guest-houses and ignored nearly everywhere else, where should the discerning family go for a civilised weekend?

Unless you have city-centre motel mentality, it can be hard to find the perfect family weekend hideaway – somewhere children are properly catered for, without

dominating the day. Those hotels which do open their arms to young guests are to be treasured. We have chosen four of the best. The only conference should be over which to sample first.

The Old Bell, Abbey Row, Malmesbury, Wilts (01666 823444). Sister hotel to the famous Woolley Grange at Bradford on Avon, the Old Bell claims to be one of the oldest inns in the country. The philosophy is relaxed elegance with family friendliness: silver service, stylish bedrooms, well-equipped children's playroom and nanny-on-site.

Parents relax by ancient fireplaces (the oldest children are fed high tea. The Den is open every day and nannies' services are free during opening hours. Malmesbury is a small, busy town beside a picturesque twist in the River Avon. In 960 it was the capital of all England. You can't miss the Abbey – it's right

next door. There are special winter breaks at £195 per adult for two nights, including B&B and an activity allowance towards horseriding, gliding, golf, tours, beauty treatments or the wine list. Children pay £5 only per meal taken.

Polmaisy House Hotel, Drumadurochit, Loch Ness, Invernesshire (01456 450343). One of my favourite hideaways, and the children's all-time best, with a menagerie of animals, a stable full of ponies, a lawn strewn with bikes, an indoor heated pool, treehouse, adventure playground, day trips and organised activities.

Adult attractions include a tennis court, permanently blazing log fire and cozy library. There's bicycle and ski hire, strolling, riding and fishing in the hotel's trout pond. Meals are plucked from the surrounding countryside: Aberdeen Angus beef, Tay salmon and Glen Affric trout. Full Highland

breakfast includes game haggis. Special rate for two adults and two children, any three nights, B&B, £399.

Holdfast Cottage, Little Malvern, Worcestershire (01684 310288). Featuring a teddy bear in every delightful room. Holdfast Cottage dates back to the 17th century, with a 60-year-old wisteria and a view that's (obviously) as old as the hills.

Grown-ups come for the food and the impeccable service, but the infant equipment list is superb: stargate, sand pit, spare push-chairs, see-saw, disposable bibs, high chair and family pets on the large lawn. Baby back-carriers can be borrowed, and picnics packed for hill walks. Special breaks for any two nights are £54 per adult per night, under-fives free, five to 10s charged according to appetite. A one-off charge of £5 for put-up beds.

Armthwaite Hall Hotel, Bassenthwaite Lake, Keswick, Cumbria (01768



Kids' choice: the Polmaisy House Hotel, Loch Ness

776551). This grand, 17th-century manor takes head-of-the-table position over Bassenthwaite Lake, looking south to the famous slopes of Skiddaw and Grisedale Pike.

The hotel's Free Bee Club includes a highly imaginative weekend activity programme for junior guests. There are swimming galas, lessons in chocolate cookery,

young etiquette, cocktail shaking, junior beauty and survival training, plus free entry to "Trotters and Friends", an idyllic animal farm.

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The Silures are coming!

Helen Lewis finds members of an Iron Age re-enactment group on their mettle

Strolling around the Glastonbury lake village, admiring the Iron Age dwellings, don't be alarmed if you come face to face with a few Celtic warriors sharpening their swords, turning knife handles on foot-driven lathes or even going into battle around reed-thatched roundhouses.

The modern Silures tribe is a history re-enactment group whose members willingly spend weekends enduring the lifestyle of first-century British Celts. They inhabit reconstructed roundhouses on sites of ancient settlements, sleeping on earthen floors – and, in good Celtic tradition, fighting.

"I spend five days a week as a bereavement counsellor and occupational therapist; for the other two, I time travel," Eryl Jones feels she has found the perfect solution to a stressful Nineties lifestyle.

Mrs Jones is joined by 30 or so others at weekends. They share a love of history and the compulsion to do something a little more King Arthurish than joining a local historical society.

Members of the original Silures tribe were described as short, wiry, dark-haired and extremely fierce, with tribal lands in Wales stretching from the River Severn to western Gwent and as far north as the Brecon Beacons. The modern group is mainly from South Wales, but English members are welcome.

"We try to emulate Iron Age Celtic life as accurately as possible to show people it was not a shabby or primitive era. This was a time when skilled people lived within an organised society," Mrs Jones says.

The group is in big demand, not only for "hack, slash and feast" shows, but also for demonstrating Celtic crafts, assisting school parties in the teaching of Iron Age history and archaeology, and doing film work. An enormous amount of time is put into researching the era. "Authenticity is the key, and everything we do is based on archaeological finds," says Mrs Jones. "Our costumes are hand-stitched, using material either woven on appropriate looms or first checked under a magnifying glass to ensure that the cloth could have been produced in the first century. The colours must be as near as possible to



Weekend warriors: members of the modern-day Silures tribe

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPHER JONES

the plant dyes used at the time, and our tools, weapons and jewellery are produced on ancient-style forges.

"Our food includes stewed and spit-roasted meat, cooked on open fires, and only vegetables and pulses that were available at the time. This means onions are out – they were introduced by the Romans at a later date. We also eat unleavened bread and honey cakes."

As first-century Celts, they live in windowless roundhouses lit by candles made from animal fat, sleep on mud floors, and cook on chimney-less fires in the centre of a single room. A Celt's life seems to have been harsh, but they evidently loved self-adornment: the wealthiest wore heavy iron jewellery, and war-

riors painted their faces and bodies with intricate patterns before battle. The modern-day Celts use the vivid blue extract from boiled leaves of wild woad plants.

The Silures were a tough lot and were never fully conquered by the Romans. After a series of clashes and struggles, they were allowed to keep their chiefs and were given a degree of self-rule, although their taxes went to Rome.

Eryl Jones's partner, Steve, provides warfare training. He manages to combine the roles of chief battle captain and safety officer. Mrs Jones is events manager.

"Anyone is welcome to join us for one event to see if they enjoy it. After

three shows they can become an associate member and take on a character to re-enact, making their own clothes, shoes and any other items they need," Mrs Jones says. "A member is expected to learn a craft or skill in keeping with their chosen character to demonstrate at events. We have no rules on the person's status, as long as it is an accurate portrayal."

The Silures tribe can be found at Castell-henllys, Dyfed; St Fagans, near Cardiff; the Glastonbury lake village; Butser Iron Age farm, near Portsmouth, and New Barn, near Dorchester. Details: Mrs Eryl Jones, 20 Mendip View, Wick, Bristol BS15 5PY (01179 374059).

Mothers tell their children that if they eat enough carrots they will be able to see in the dark. That was exactly what I found I could do one night in the New Forest this week – although the magic element that made it possible was not root vegetables, but a chunky, telescope-like instrument known as a thermal imager.

Our counting deer with the Forestry Commission rangers, I moved into a strange, spooky environment in which heat, rather than light, reveals the secrets of night life on the land. The imager picks up the radiant warmth given off by living creatures, trees and buildings, and is so sensitive that it can detect a rabbit a mile away. Any heat source shows up as a reddish glow.

Cruising in a Land Rover between the woods around New Park Manor – now a hotel, but originally one of the hunting lodges built by Charles I – we soon picked up deer feeding out in a field. The night was pitch-dark, with a thin crescent of moon showing through bare branches, and the naked eye could see nothing. But through the imager even I, a beginner, could discern that the bright pink shapes standing out from the black background were fallow bucks. When we approached within 100 metres, their details became so clear that ghostly flickers of red bounced off their antlers as they turned their heads back and forth.

There were also a dozen rabbits going about their business. As I watched, a fox appeared and made a dash at one of them; when its target escaped, it sat down to take stock of the situation, quite unaware that humans had eyes on it. In this surreal scene, the true colours of the animals were immaterial: because it was their body heat that we were seeing, all showed up the same reddish-pink. For the young local



Duff Hart-Davis

Forest rangers went out at night with a thermal imager, as used by the SAS. They were looking for deer – but that's not all that glowed in the dark...

rangers, Robert Colin-Stokes and Andy Page, this was a trial run, the first time they had used the imager. But they had an expert tutor in the form of Derek Stocker, the commission's wildlife officer for the south and west, who has conducted extensive trials over the past two years.

Counting woodland deer by conventional means is notoriously difficult. Even with a big team of trained spotters, many animals are missed, and totals arrived at are generally reckoned to be one-third below the real ones. In recent years it has become fashionable to count by collecting dung samples, but this method also has many detractors.

Enter the thermal imager, which started life as a targeting device on surface-to-air missile

systems. Two years ago, the Forestry Commission borrowed one from the SAS, and was so impressed that it hired another from the maker, Thorn EMI, for six months. Again, the results were excellent. Now it has bought one of its own, at the trifling cost of £40,000.

Trials in Scotland, Yorkshire, the Marches (in Shropshire) and the West Country have revealed that earlier counts were indeed serious underestimates. For instance, in Mortimer Forest, near Ludlow, the experienced resident ranger, John Speed, reckoned that he had 200 fallow deer on his ground. In a single night with the imager counters he found 460.

The merit of the device is threefold: it is very accurate; it does not disturb the deer, and it enables the counters to sex most of the animals they see. Furnished with precise data of this kind, the Commission is in a far better position to explain to the public why annual culls are necessary (rangers have to shoot about 1,000 deer in the New Forest every year to keep the population stable).

As Mr Stocker found, the view through the first timer seems to take some getting used to. The heat patterns given off by sheep and red deer (which have very thick coats) are much the same, so that at long range it is hard to tell the difference. Roe deer, in contrast, stand out very well, and at this time of the year bucks are easily distinguished, because their growing antlers are covered by the thick, hairy skin known as velvet, and this, being full of blood vessels, shows up brightly.

Beginners, however, do not take long to cotton on to the niceties of the new system. "There are 12 fallow deer out there," reported Robert at one point during our night cruise. "One of them's just defecated, and the droppings are still glowing red."

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Anna Pavord continues her series on gardening principles. This week: pruning

Plants present many of the same characteristics as children. An intense period of luring them on, worrying about the right food and so on, is followed by an equally intense period of trying to hold them back. But gardeners do have the enormous advantage over parents: there is no equivalent pruning in child care. It is a mistake, though, to look at secateurs primarily as defensive weapons. Good pruning is a matter of working with, rather than against, a plant. The most important thing, before you make any cuts, is to have clearly in your mind the essential qualities of the plant you are about to attack.

If you have a tall, upright shrub blocking a view in the garden, it is pointless to chop the top off each season in an effort to refashion it as a short shrub. Instead, you must come to terms with the irritating fact that you, or the previous owner of the garden, have planted it in the wrong place. Therefore, it should be moved rather than heavily redesigned. Some tall, upright shrubs, such as the philadelphus or May-dewergeria, do need regular pruning, but this is not to make them shorter. It is to ensure a plentiful display of new growth that will flower more freely than the old.

Pruning is something we impose on shrubs for our own ends rather than theirs. Shrubs do not die if they are left unpruned, as anyone who has taken over a neglected garden knows only too well. Away from the flashing knife, jasmine just keeps getting bigger. So do pyracantha, forsythia and weigela. Pruning is a useful tool in erecting the delicate barrier against chaos which is at the core of garden-making. A garden is a construct, a reordering of the elements — earth, water, leaves, flowers — that exist untrammelled on the other side of the barrier.

Armed with secateurs and some strong, long-handled loppers, you become a sculptor, releasing the forms suggested by the material to hand. With overgrown shrubs, you have a choice: sculpting or mounding. The second is the more drastic: cutting the whole thing to the ground and working with the new growth that springs up the following season. This is the best course to take if you want to move a shrub. Unencumbered by top growth, it will be easier to manhandle. It will also find the business of putting down new roots easier if it does not simultaneously have to send food and drink up to the top storey.

This is what I am going to do with an Alba rose that has become ridiculously large and hots out the planting behind. Once I had become irritated by it, I saw how little it was



PHOTOGRAPH: GARDEN PICTURE LIBRARY

You've got to be cruel to be kind

contributing after its brief, though admittedly heady, season of flowering. It needs a less prominent position. There is still time, before it gets into full growing gear, to cut it down and move it to a new billet.

From this time of the year onwards, gardeners get infected by a kind of fever. We want to get outside and start flailing around, trying to regain possession of the battleground. There is a tendency to snip away at everything in sight, reducing all shrubs, whatever their habit, to barbed bushes. Resist the temptation. The garden may be tidy, but by reducing all the shrubs to the same common denominator you will

have missed the point of growing them at all.

In the most general terms, shrubs that flower in the first half of the year do so on growth made during the previous year. These can be pruned after flowering. Shrubs that flower in the second half of the year bear the flowers on the new wood they have made in the first half. These are best not pruned straight after flowering, but left until about now. Pruning kicks a shrub into top growing gear. "Crums," it says to itself, "someone's trying to do me in," and it pumps energy into dormant growth buds lying along its stems to replace what it feels it has lost. If you pruned a late summer-

flowering buddleia or caryopteris when it had just finished flowering, the resultant tender new growths would coincide fatally with the first frosts. So you leave them until February before pruning.

Buddleia thrives perfectly well without any pruning, as you can see on any railway embankment. But, left unpruned, the bushes get very big. And the trusses of flower coming from old wood are smaller than the ones that are produced on new wood. So, to get the shrub to produce the showiest flowers, you need to persuade it to produce new wood each season. First, cut out all weak and straggly growths altogether.

Then cut back the rest of the growths drastically, leaving just one or two pairs of buds on each branch. Old specimens may become congested after years of this treatment. If a likely looking new shoot springs from below the main framework, take the opportunity to saw away one of the old branches completely.

Rambling roses and rambler types such as 'Alberic' should have been dealt with when they finished flowering last year. The climbers that need attention now are the climbing sorts of hybrid tea roses. Roses in this group flower on new wood but (unlike ramblers) rarely produce new growths from the base of the

plant. You are much more likely to find new shoots growing from old wood higher up the plant. Cut old stems back to the junction with the new growth and tie the new growth in. Cut back the lateral growths (the side branches springing from the main ones) to about six inches. Now and again, it pays to take out a stem completely at ground level, especially when the main framework of a climbing rose has crept higher and higher up its support. This drastic reduction sometimes forces the rose to send out a new shoot from the base. A hefty spring mulch will help, too.

All dogwoods, such as *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima', grown for their decorative winter bark, should be cut back hard now. The bark colour is much brighter on new growth than old, so you want as much of it as you can get.

I cheat here and cut just half back each season. That is because I do not want to lose entirely the bulk of the shrub in spring. For the all-or-nothing effect, cut back all growths to within three inches of the ground. Ambivalent gardeners can cut out the duller coloured wood and leave the rest. 'Elegantissima' has pretty, variegated foliage, so there is some merit in having this sooner rather than later.

Pruning practicalities

This checklist may help new gardeners to decide which pruning treatment to deal out to common shrubs, and avoid unnecessary haircuts.

No regular pruning; occasional thinning and removal of dead shoots: Abelia, abutilon, acer, camellia, evergreen ceanothus, cistus, cotoneaster, cyprus, elaeagnus, fatsia, genista, hamamelis, hibiscus, hydrangea, magnolia, osmanthus, pyracantha (but can be trimmed to shape if necessary May-July), rhododendron, senecio (cut back flower stems in autumn), skimmia, syringa.

Remove one-third of oldest shoots in spring or after flowering each year, to encourage fresh flowering shoots: Berberis, choisya, cotinus, deutzia, escallonia, forsythia, hydrangea (or leave unpruned), winter jasmine, kerria, philadelphus, philomis, potentilla, ribes, rosemary, spiraea, symphoricarpos, viburnum (early flowering), weigela.

Cut back hard in spring: Buddleia, caryopteris, deciduous ceanothus, ceratostigma, cornus (foliage forms), fuchsia (frost usually does it for you), lavatera, perovskia.



TOOLSHED: GREENHOUSES

Given even the slightest encouragement, gardening tends to progress rapidly from necessary chore to obsessive passion. At some point in this transition you are bound to have cause to consider buying a greenhouse. Do it. With the exception of a new and bigger garden, nothing can so immediately and dramatically extend your horticultural horizons.

The standard greenhouse is 6ft x 8ft, but any sensible gardener will go as big as he or she can afford and accommodate. It will fill up remarkably quickly. When you sow a packet of seeds you don't need a lot of room, but by the time the seedlings are pricked out into three-inch pots it is a different story. Some greenhouses are designed to accept add-on sections, allowing for expansion in line with demand, which seems eminently sensible. For the tightest spaces, a hexagonal design provides a lot of growing room for the area covered and looks natty into the bargain.

A big decision is whether to go for wood or metal. The imprudence of using a framework containing iron is illustrated by the small fortune recently spent on restoring the Victorian palm house at Kew. Iron rusts — and greenhouses are damp places. The majority of greenhouses are now of non-corroding aluminium which is both cheap and virtually maintenance-free. A new 6ft x 8ft one can be yours for less than £300. However, its bright, silvery surface tends to disconcertingly obtrusive. An acrylic paint finish, available in a variety of neutral colours, spares this embarrassment but bumps up the price considerably.

Wooden greenhouses have the great advantage of being more attractive to look at. The main drawback is that most softwoods rot fairly rapidly unless they are painted or varnished and regularly maintained. The only way to avoid this major inconvenience is to use a naturally durable timber such as Western Red Cedar. This will resist rot for decades without any treatment, and weather to a pleasing silvery grey. Unfortunately, wouldn't you just know it, they cost at least twice as much as an equivalent aluminium model.

Horticultural glass is supplied as standard to most greenhouses. Other possible options are toughened glass (expensive), or various plastics such as polycarbonate, polythene or rigid UPVC. All are less good at transmitting light and have a limited life span so are only worth considering if there is a real risk that children, or vandals, may break the glass.

It always makes sense to look before you buy, and larger garden centres usually have a number of show greenhouses. Check the framework is sturdy, with no big gaps between panels. The door should fit well, open easily and preferably be wide enough for a wheelbarrow. The ridge height should be a minimum of 7ft sloping down to not less than 5ft at the eaves.

The biggest problem with most off-the-shelf greenhouses is inadequate ventilation. The area of the opened vents should be around one sixth that of the floor. For a 6ft x 8ft greenhouse this means a minimum of three; preferably two in the roof and one at lower level, so cool air can be drawn in at the bottom as hot air leaves from the top. Most manufacturers will fit extra vents for a reasonable charge — money well spent.

The shopping list does not stop at the structure itself. You will certainly want staging (wide, worktop-height shelving) along at least one side. This needs to be sturdy and easy to remove. Running mains electricity out to a greenhouse can be an expensive undertaking but it will greatly increase your options. An electric fan heater is the most efficient method of heating a greenhouse and a heated propagator is a great help for raising both seed and cuttings.

Finally, a warning. Putting up a greenhouse can be like struggling with an inscrutable puzzle. You would be wise to get in at least one extra pair of hand and be prepared for a long and frustrating day.

Tom Barber

Just published is the new *Yellow Book* (NGS £5.50), listing the 3,500 gardens open this year under the National Gardens Scheme. Early openings to catch displays of snowdrops have become an increasingly popular. Among gardens open either this week or next are:

Bucks Great Barfield, High Wycombe (01494 563741), home of the snowdrop king, Richard Nutt. Open next Sunday (2-5pm). Admission £1.

Cambs Anglesey Abbey, Lode (01223 811200) a fine National Trust garden where 30 different kinds of snowdrop re-emerged after underground had been cleared. Open this weekend and next (11am-4pm). Admission £3.20.

Devon Little Cumbre, Pennsylvania Rd, Exeter (01392 58315), Dr and Mrs John Lloyd's half-acre garden with snowdrops, hellebores and small trees chosen for their bark. Open next Sunday (2-5pm). Admission £1.

Gloucestershire Colston Raleigh (01395 567541), part of a four-acre smallholding with snowdrops (and rheas). Open next Sunday (11am-5pm). Admission £1.

Glos Minchinhampton Gardens, Minchinhampton, two gardens, Lammis Park and St Francis (01453 82188) with giant snowdrops and trough gardens. Open tomorrow (11am-4.30pm). Admission £2. The Old Rectory, Duntisbourne Rouse, nr Cirencester, described brilliantly by owner Mary Keen in her



CUTTINGS

recent book *Creating a Garden* (Conran Octopus, £25). Winter flowers a speciality. Open Monday 24 Feb (11am-3pm). Admission £2.

Cinderline Cottage, Dymock, nr Newent (01531 890265). A huge collection of snowdrops, both species and hybrids. Open tomorrow, and 18 and 20 Feb (12-5pm). Admission £1.

Hants Little Court, Crawley, nr Winchester (01962 776365), peaceful, sheltered garden with a new spring woodland walk. Open tomorrow, and 17 and 18 Feb (2-5.30pm). Admission £1.50.

Kent Goodnestone Park, Wingham, nr Canterbury. Jane Austen stayed here amongst the spring bulbs. Open tomorrow (12-6pm). Admission £2.30.

Leamington Chatham, snowdrops, aconites and a serene garden. Open next Sunday (2-5pm). Admission £1.50.

Lines 21 Chapel St, Haccorby (01778 57031-4), Hellebores and snowdrops are to the fore at the moment. Open today and tomorrow, and next weekend (11am-5pm). Admission £1. Manor Farm, Kestby, a plantman's half-acre garden with good collections of snowdrops and hellebores. Open next Sat and Sun (11am-4pm). Admission £1.

London Myddelton House Gardens, Bulls Cross, Enfield (01992 713838), the famous gardens created by the Edwardian plant enthusiast Edward A Bowles. Open next Sunday and Monday (2-5pm). Admission £1.25.

Norfolk Rainthorpe Hall, Tasburgh, south of Norwich (01508 470618). Snowdrops and hazel coppice just beginning to swing with catkins. Open next Sunday (1-4pm). Admission £2.50.

Notts Hodsok Priory, Blyth, (01909 591204). Thousands of aconites and snowdrops. Open daily (10am-4pm) for four weeks during Feb and March (check with the Priory for start of show). Admission £2.50.

Oxon Broadwell House, Broadwell, nr Lechlade (01367 860230), good topiary and early spring bulbs. Open tomorrow (2-4pm). Admission £1.50.

Shropshire Erway Farm House, Dudstone Heath, nr Ellesmere (01691 75479), rare and interesting plants including many different kinds of snowdrop. Open next Sunday (1-5pm). Admission £1.50.

Surrey 9 Raymond Close, Fetcham opening for the first time next Sunday (12-4pm). Admission £1.50.

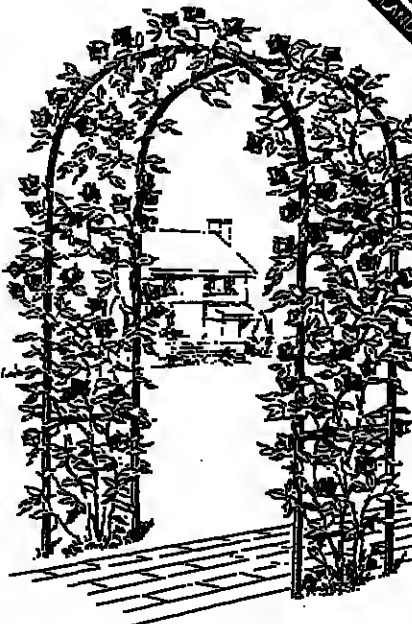
Wiltshire Lacock Abbey Gardens, Lacock, carpets of aconites and snowdrops at this National Trust property. Open today and tomorrow, and next weekend (2-5pm). Admission £1.50.

Worcs Dial Park, Chaddesley Corbett, (01562 777451). Collections of snowdrops in this recently developed garden. Open 19 and 20 Feb (1-5pm). Admission £1.

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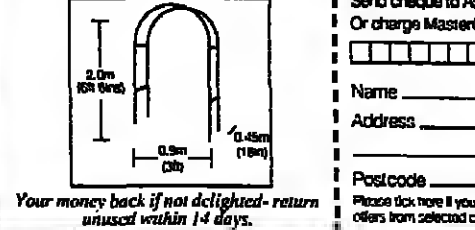
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important? By Sheila Prophet

just savour the pretty colours



advised to
top, tail and
peel them before
eating.

"Fresh organic fruit or vegetables produced - professionally under the same conditions as conventional produce will always taste better," says Peter Segger, managing director of Organic Farm Foods Ltd. "The organic produce has been allowed to grow at its own pace rather than being forced with the use of chemical feeds. Organic carrots, for instance, will have around three weeks longer in the soil than conventional ones. This means they take up water at a slower rate and develop a higher fibre or carbon content, which is what gives them flavour."

"On the other hand," he admits, "a groovy old dried organic vegetable sitting outside some wholefood shop is going to taste worse than a fresh conventional vegetable." Poor presentation is now becoming a thing of the past as companies like Organic Farm Foods - which supplies most of the top supermarkets - ensure their products match up in the looks department.

"People are used to vegetables looking a certain way, so we have to compromise," says Segger. "Old-fashioned open-pollinated traditional varieties taste better than the new hybrids, but don't look as good. To achieve a balance we have had to mix the two."

So what are the main problems - and the solutions?

Pesticides
People aren't just choosing organic foods only for their taste but also for what they consider their safety. Organic is a term protected by EC law, which means the produce is free of chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides. 25,000 tons of these chemicals are used in this country every year, and the Soil Association says more than half of them have been known to be harmful, causing illnesses

ranging from birth defects to cancer. Organisations representing conventional growers insist that much of the industry no longer uses these chemicals, and are instead moving towards more natural methods of pest control, such as traps to stop the pests reaching the vegetables, and protecting crops by covering them with agricultural fleece.

The Government claims that in 25 years, no one has reported any ill effects from the use of pesticides. However, its own figures have shown that a wide range of foods - including milk, fruit and vegetables - have been found to contain residues of these chemicals.

Since *The Independent* campaigned on this issue 18 months ago, the official advice is to take care. With carrots, for example, which have been shown to take up a high degree of pesticides, we are

Beating the seasons
Once it was accepted that crops were seasonal, but today we expect vegetables to be available all year round. The result is that there is pressure on growers to force their crops using chemical feeds, and to grow "back-to-back" crops, which causes the build-up of pests such as carrot fly and diseases, which leads to an even greater use of pesticides. It can also cause soil erosion and strip the land of nutrients.

"Because they use natural methods, organic farmers simply can't push their systems as hard as this," says a Soil Association spokesman.

The future
The frightening news is the approach of so-called Frankenstein foods - crops such as corn and soybeans - which have been genetically engineered to be resistant to weed killer and antibiotics and even capable of killing insects.

The producers insist they are safe, but as Greenpeace point out: "No one knows for sure the effect these new life forms will have on our environment. We have never before eaten these ingredients in the human diet. How

do they know they are safe?" Across Europe there is huge resistance to the importing of these foods from America - particularly soy, which is used in 60 per cent of our processed foods - and in Britain, supermarket chains are lining up either to ban them altogether, or to insist that foods using these ingredients are clearly labelled.

The good news, meanwhile, is that organic options are growing fast. While supermarkets used to report that customers simply didn't want organic foods, Sainsbury's claimed last month that demand from customers is now so far ahead of supply that the company is trying to persuade its conventional suppliers to switch to organic.

Meanwhile, Elgro, a company of 36 farmers in Lincolnshire, announced last week that it intends switching some of its land to organic use. Under Soil Association rules, it takes at least two years before land can be declared free of chemicals and food produced from it can be labelled organic. In the past, British farmers have been reluctant to make this switch because of the losses they suffer during conversion.

is this year encouraging the funds available to compensate them for these losses, and the Labour Party has promised to seek a "greatly expanded" programme of support from the EU.

Grow it yourself
Whatever the pros and cons of buying vegetables, the tastiest option is still growing your own. Anyone with a bit of land can do it, says gardening broadcaster Pippa Greenwood.

"If you've never done it before, first arm yourself with a good book - I recommend *The Vegetable Garden Displayed*, by Joy Larkcom - and a few seed catalogues," she advises. "Then prepare your soil thoroughly before sowing. Ideally this would have begun a couple of months ago, but it isn't too late to start now. Clear it of perennial weeds, then mix in plenty of organic compost or well rotted manure - BSE has made some people wary of cow manure, but stable manure is perfectly safe."

There are now seeds for all seasons, but the next few weeks is the time to sow early potatoes and carrots and what are called second early peas, all of which will be ready to eat by summer.

Meanwhile cabbage can be grown outdoors from April. "They do take up more space, but there is nothing to stop you just growing six cabbages if you want to," says Pippa. "As with all the vegetables, what variety you choose depends on what you want from it - whether you want a green leafy cabbage for instance, or one with a firm head which is ideal for making coleslaw. Studying the catalogue or seed packet will tell you all you need to know."

Make sure your growing vegetables have adequate moisture, and even the amateur gardener should be rewarded with a worthwhile crop in summer. Most commonly available seeds have been dressed to repel birds or to boost their chances of success, and while Pippa says these dressings are fairly harmless, you may prefer to seek out the harder to find organic seeds.

The Henry Doubleday Research Association have a free enquiry pack, which you can obtain by sending a large stamped addressed envelope to HDRA, Ryton on Durham, Coventry CV8 3LG.

The New Kitchen Garden by *The Independent's* Anna Pavord is published by Dorling Kindersley (£16.99).

Ad Watch Full of beans

Lathekey kids and single parent families are far from typical fodder used by British advertisers to sell their wares. The traditional approach plays on our aspirations - peddling dreams rather than the harsh realities of Nineties life. Which is exactly why Heinz chose to break the mould in its latest TV campaign which broke last week.

In one commercial, we see kids returning home after school and starting to make their own tea before their mother's return. In another an exhausted lorry driver coming home late, whose only glimpse of his kids is when they're in bed, asleep. Central to each is one of Heinz' staple products - tinned soup, tomato ketchup and spaghetti. The aim? "To support Heinz' position at the heart of a safe and secure family life," explains Andy Bryant, brand account director at Heinz advertising agency Bates Durland. "We wanted contemporary Nineties family situations rather than fantasy or nostalgia. It is an attempt to make Heinz feel up to date, whilst still retaining its traditional core values for being constant and comforting."

Gone are direct references concerning the product - that Heinz "means" more tinned, greater thickness, better taste. And in an added twist, the music chosen to accompany each commercial is the Zulu rhythms of African band Ladysmith Black Mambazo. The contrast is stark. "It distances the campaign from the predictable associations of Western music," Bryant explains. "It creates a fresh, contemporary impression of Heinz and underscores the warm, human emotions of the commercials."

The effect is undoubtedly reassuring, although the strategy is not risk-free.



Advertising traditionally lays itself open to criticism when dabbling in "real" issues and social concerns. One recent advertisement for McDonald's, for example, prompted a flurry of complaints after showing a young boy stage-managing a "chance" meeting between his estranged parents.

Heinz spokesman Steve Marinker doubts the company's latest efforts could cause anyone offence. "People are becoming much more advertising literate and far more cynical about what they see. It's intriguing that, in 1997, there are still many ads which contain a saccharine view of British life - sun pouring through the window onto the breakfast table, blonde blue-eyed kid, rugged dad. This is where the real danger lies, he claims. "We are simply trying to be up to date and relevant to our consumers."

The company's strategy to date certainly seems to be having this effect. Despite press reports three years ago that Heinz would begin to favour direct marketing - better known to many as "junk mail" - the company has continued to spend money on TV and press advertising to communicate key products. A wider range of personalised direct marketing activities have been designed to strengthen the company's relationship with the consumer.

When a price cutting war recently hit the baked beans business, sales of Heinz Baked Beans remained unaffected - the company claims - even in the face of retailers selling own-brands for 2p a tin. Today, Heinz enjoys a 53 per cent share of tinned beans sales, 57 per cent share for ketchup and 59 per cent share of the tinned soup business. Expect Heinz to play on the emotions for quite some years to come.

Meg Carter

A closer encounter of the third kind

For an eye on the sky, as Comet Hale-Bopp fast approaches, binoculars are your best bet, writes Mike Gerrard

"Comets are like cats," said the astronomer David Levy. "They have tails, and they do precisely what they want." He could have added that people are fascinated by them, too, as the interest in the latest comet to come our way shows. Comet Hale-Bopp is visible already, and will be at its brightest in the northern hemisphere in late March and early April when it's a mere 120 million miles from Earth. As this is the closest it gets during its orbit of some 3,000 years, is it time to rush out and buy a telescope?

"Absolutely not," says David Lawrence, the Technical Manager of Broadhurst, Clarkson and Fuller Ltd in London's Farringdon Road, which has been selling telescopes since 1785. "Most people think that because it's a comet you must buy a telescope to get a good look, and they go into Argos or Dixons and buy the cheapest they can get. In fact it's very rare to use a normal telescope to look at a comet like Hale-Bopp, because a comet is quite a large item in the sky. A telescope will show you just a very small part of it. You might see the fuzzy nucleus but you would miss the tail."

Lawrence's advice is to buy a good pair of binoculars instead, which, after all, are merely two small telescopes that can be focused simultaneously. He recommends the Russian-made Helios brand, starting at about £50. "You want a pair that's about 7x50 or 10x50 at the most. They're also dual-purpose in that you can use them for bird-watching or take them on holiday."

The first figure represents the magnification power of the lens, and the second the size in millimetres of the objective lens - the big end. If you choose a magnification power bigger than about 10, the binoculars become too heavy to hold steady without a tripod. The wider the objective lens, the wider the field of view and the better the image, as more light is available. However, there is obviously a practical limit on how big a view you can see, and how many times you can magnify it, before you end up with binoculars the size of two milk bottles. Compact binoculars often have an objective lens that's only 20-25mm across, making them light to carry but limited on the detail you'll get.

"The next price level up from the £50 Helios ones," says Lawrence, "is about £100. At that level we'd recommend names like Halina and Pentax, or a range we stock called Viking. To be honest, there are very few manufacturers and binoculars from the same factories just go out under different brand names. You have to virtually double the price each time to get a noticeable increase in quality, so the next level up is about £200. A pair for £140 is not that much better than a pair for £100, but if you're prepared to spend £200 then you will see an improvement. The best advice you can give



Telling the comet: Hale Bopp is best seen with double vision

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW W. BURNHAM

is for people to choose whether they want to spend £50, £100 or £200, and then just find a pair they like. But for a beginner, spend £50 on Helios and you'll get a perfectly good pair of binoculars."

When a salesman tells you not to spend money, you feel like you must be looking at the world through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars, but his advice is echoed by Ken Sheldon, who edits the newsletter of the Federation of Astronomical Societies. "Most people are put off astronomy by getting a cheap telescope. Unless it's a good make you won't see things clearly, they won't be sharp and you'll be disappointed. Get a decent pair of binoculars to get a good look at Hale-Bopp. My own are an old pair made by the East German Zeiss company, which cost about £100 and are quite brilliant."

In good weather conditions Hale-Bopp is already visible to the naked eye, as Ken Sheldon confirms. "I saw it only yesterday morning. I got up at 5am and the sky was nice and clear so it was easy to see with the naked eye, at about 15-20 degrees up from the horizon. It's as bright as any star but it doesn't have a huge tail, though even with the naked eye you can see that it is quite clearly not a star. I had another look three or four days ago when it was a little bit misty and then I did need binoculars. But if it does materialise in the way that it promises then it could develop into something quite spectacular."

The federation has about 3,800 members, and interest in astronomy is such that Ken's wife Chris, who is the secretary, receives two to three inquiries every day

from people looking for their nearest group. When the BBC broadcast a radio series about astronomy a few years ago, 300 letters arrived in the first month.

David Lawrence confirms the upsurge in interest when a comet like Hale-Bopp grabs the attention. "When something like this makes the national newspapers we notice the additional customers. If there's an item on the TV news, you can guarantee we'll be much busier the next day."

Broadhurst, Clarkson and Fuller have been selling telescopes since they began to become widely available in the late 18th century. Their invention is generally credited to a Dutch optician, Hans Lippershey, in 1608, and opticians continued to play a big role. John Dollond invented the achromatic object glass in 1757, which enabled better

refracting telescopes to be manufactured. "The Farringdon-Holborn area was the optical-producing area of London," says David Lawrence, "and one of the first opticians to make a telescope, Charles Tulley, was based on this site."

Tulley would no doubt be astonished to see the huge brass telescope that fills the shop window, a model from 1860 that's worth about £20,000. That's also the price for the top-of-the-range modern computerised telescopes, for sale to universities and well-to-do amateur astronomers.

"If something like Hale-Bopp does excite people's interest," Lawrence says, "then from a buying point of view the choice is fairly straightforward. If you want to get a telescope for looking at the stars and planets then you will have to spend about £250. There's a good choice at that price level, but beyond that there's nothing until you get to the £650-£700 price range. Then you'll get something with an electric drive which will allow you to do photography, where of course stability is all-important. Between those two price levels there's nothing."

More difficult might be finding somewhere to buy, as the shop in Farringdon Road is the only one of its type in Britain. "The nearest shop like ours," says Lawrence, "is in Paris, and there are two more in Germany. There are some other people in other parts of the country but they are mostly working from home and making telescopes to order rather than to sell direct to the beginner. David Hinds in Ting distributives and makes telescopes, and there's Beacon Hill Telescopes in Humberside, but they only make stuff to order. The best advice I can give people outside London - if they don't want to ring us up or use the mail-order service - is to go to their nearest bird-watching specialist and get a good pair of binoculars."

And if you have £20,000 to spare, the brass model in the window is for sale, but only when they find a replacement. "That's about the fourth one we've had. People from Disney are interested in it. We sold the last one to the Sultan of Oman."

Broadhurst, Clarkson and Fuller, 63 Farringdon Road, London EC1 (0171-405 2156). The Federation of Astronomical Societies, Whitehaven, Maytree Road, Lower Moor, Pershore, Wores WR10 2NY. British Astronomical Society (0171-734 4145). David Hinds, distributor and manufacturer (01442 827768). Beacon Hill Telescopes, manufacturers (01472-692959).

Aviatours is running flights from Heathrow and Manchester to view Hale-Bopp from 37,000ft on 29 March at a cost of £125 (01252 793250 or 0161-832 7972).

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Thee of the best Local landmarks

The Causeway Cottage Tea Rooms is in Finchamfield, north Essex, which was home to the late Dodie Smith, author of *101 Dalmatians*. It's a picture-book English village, with ducks, old church and cottage gardens. The Grade II-listed Tea Rooms, overlooking the village pond and green, has traded for 40 years and is a magnet for touring cyclists in summer. Not surprising, as the tea rooms serves morning coffee and afternoon tea with home-made cakes and sandwiches. The owner's quarters include two bedrooms with potential for a third small one. For sale as a going concern through Trembach Welch (01371 872117) for £150,000.



Number 3-5 The Square in East Morton, in the Aire Valley, two miles from Bingley in West Yorkshire, currently operates as the village fish-and-chip shop in one half of the 17th-century building, and Jacques Cottage Antiques in the other. However, there is outline planning permission for conversion to either two character homes, or one large house (though what would the village do without its cod and chips?). Grade II listed, it stands at the head of the village square. Delightful country walks are promised and access to Wharfedale. £80,000 through Simon Thornton (01943 816213).



Until recently, the tiny, thatched building opposite "Swallows Meet" in Cove-ton, south Devon, was the village Post Office. Now both properties are being sold as one, with the potential to turn the old PO into a guest annex. The Grade II-listed, whitewashed thatched house is built of stone and cob and has been extensively renovated; the sitting room has a flagstone floor, painted beams and wood-burning stove. £185,000 through Marchand Petit (01548 857588).



Rosalind Russell

Take cover before the blitz

Who will pay your mortgage if you can't? Nic Cicutti offers advice

It never happens to you. Others may lose their jobs, have accidents or be forced out of work through illness, but not you. Until it happens, of course.

When it does, you begin to wonder how you will be able to maintain your mortgage payments, pay other household bills and keep a roof over your head.

Despite this week's 68,000 fall in the number of those out of work, hundreds of thousands of people still join the dole queue each year, even if for a short while.

Andrew Walbank, an architect, is one of them. Unlike many, however, after losing his job recently he is waiting to hear from Skipton Building Society whether mortgage payments of £200 a month for his home in Ilkley, North Yorkshire, will be met by a special insurance policy he has.

If the payments are met, it will be the second time in just over two years that Mr Walbank has used his policy. In 1995, he was also made redundant. Then, the Skipton policy paid his home loan for 12 months.

Mr Walbank, who has experience in many areas of architecture, says: "I decided when I bought this place in 1990 that I wanted some protection. This relieves you of the pressure and responsibility of worrying about what happens when you are out of work. Despite the jobless total

reaching record levels earlier this decade, accident, sickness and unemployment insurance, so-called ASU cover, was until recently taken out by barely 25 per cent of mortgage borrowers.

A large part of the reason was that up to two years ago, borrowers knew that mortgage interest benefits from the state would be paid if their lost their jobs. In fact, all it took was a two-month wait plus four more when half the interest was paid.

Another reason was the high cost. For people to be covered cost about £7 per £100 of monthly mortgage payments. Cover for a typical £50,000 loan might cost £25 a month.

But since October 1995, new borrowers must wait nine months before income support will meet their mortgage payments.

Today, a Halifax spokeswoman says: "We have seen an increase in the number of people taking out the cover, up to one third of new borrowers since the rules were changed."

"We don't want to force-feed people. All we can do is point out that it is there and that it can be useful. But there is a fine line involved."

One major factor in making such policies more popular has been the reduction in the cost of cover. Halifax's cover now costs £4.98 per £100 of monthly mortgage payments.

As with many policies, cover kicks in after a person has been out of work for 30 days although 180 days must elapse from the time the policy first started before a person is eligible for benefits. However, sickness or accidents ensure immediate payment, which last for up to 12 months.

Skipton Building Society believes in the product so much that it offers free unemployment cover to all its new borrowers and charges about £4 per £100 to extend the policy. Gerry Dupree, an independent financial adviser in Gloucester whose company, Gerry Dupree & Co, specialises in mortgage advice, says he makes a point of recommending the cover to all his clients.

"The way we work is that we do not sell the same policy to all our clients," Mr Dupree says. "They all have different needs and requirements. Some will just need redundancy cover, because they have adequate sickness provision in their contracts. By making it cheaper, we make it more attractive." His company belongs to Mortgage Intelligence, a network of 400 home loans specialists, who can negotiate special deals on their clients' behalf.

Philip Watson, a director at John Charcol, the UK's largest mortgage broker, also believes strongly in the product: "There is a tendency to



Andrew Walbank twice relied on mortgage insurance

assume that if you lose your job the state will step in. In fact, 81 per cent of people do not qualify for benefits.

Also, people forget that this kind of cover is not just about unemployment. About 60 per cent of our claims are for accidents and sickness."

John Charcol too uses a number of different insurance companies to meet its clients' needs. "We need to be able to ensure that you get what's right, whether a person is a steepjack or an office worker."

Mr Walbank isn't either of

those. But he says: "I cannot speak too highly of this insurance. Even when I find work again, I shall still continue my payments towards it."

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Outwardly mobile

Where are the pioneers in the London space race buying?
By Penny Jackson

In all parts of London, families are giving up fashionable postcodes for a large house and even larger savings. At the heart of their minds, though, there is always the niggling thought that during the recession prices in these outlying areas fell fastest and hardest. Even though recovery in some pockets of east and south London is still slow, places with a good stock of solid family houses are seeing rapid growth. Yolande Barnes of Savills Research likens the market to a rising tide: when it retreats it will not go back to the same point and new areas become established.

In the Eighties, Battersea was swept into a new price bracket and it is from this area people are now pushing south in search of more space for their money. Ms Barnes believes real pioneers should be looking towards Lewisham and New Cross, with its beautiful squares near Goldsmith's College and, further in, Paddington and Camberwell.

Winkworth, the London estate agents, has noticed an acceleration of the filter effect, which is a common feature of a rising, low volume market. As buyers move into secondary residential areas, prices are pushed up, creating an exodus of purchasers into neighbouring value-for-money locations.

In west London, this trail may start in Kensington via Northing Hill to Shepherd's Bush where £300,000 would buy a good-sized family house; while those priced out of Hammersmith and Chiswick have discovered a few pockets of Acton with large homes at reasonable prices.

In south London, the enormous increase in prices in Battersea, in some cases 30 per cent over the past four months, is pushing buyers out of Wandsworth and Clapham towards Balham, Streatham and Tooting. A £400,000 house in the best roads in Streatham and

on Tooting Common would cost £600,000 to £700,000 two miles away.

Yet precisely where you buy is important, says Simon Agace, chairman of Winkworth. The right ingredients must be there: community, architecture, transport and education. "Even if you overbid and buy into next year's appreciation area you are modestly safe but not in a tertiary area. In a boom market the gap narrows between the good and poor areas, in a recession it widens."

De Beauvoir, on the borders of Canonbury and Dalston, has the required architecture to raise it above some of its struggling east London neighbours. Price-sensitive house-hunters in Islington and Highbury are finding their money goes much further. Instead of paying around half a million for a large Victorian house, they are not likely to be stretched beyond £320,000 here.

In the leafy, outlying areas, places such as Dulwich and Muswell Hill, solid and traditional residential spots, are newly fashionable. Some half-a-million pounds is a good starting point for a large family house close to Hampstead, whereas a few miles out in increasingly popular Crouch End, that figure would be reduced to about half.

In the leafy south-east, Blackheath, with its open spaces and genuine village feel, is seeing price rises of 3 to 4 per cent a month. The spill-over of buyers has narrowed the gap between the adjoining Lee conservation area and the heart of the village. A house valued at £190,000 last year is now selling at £255,000.

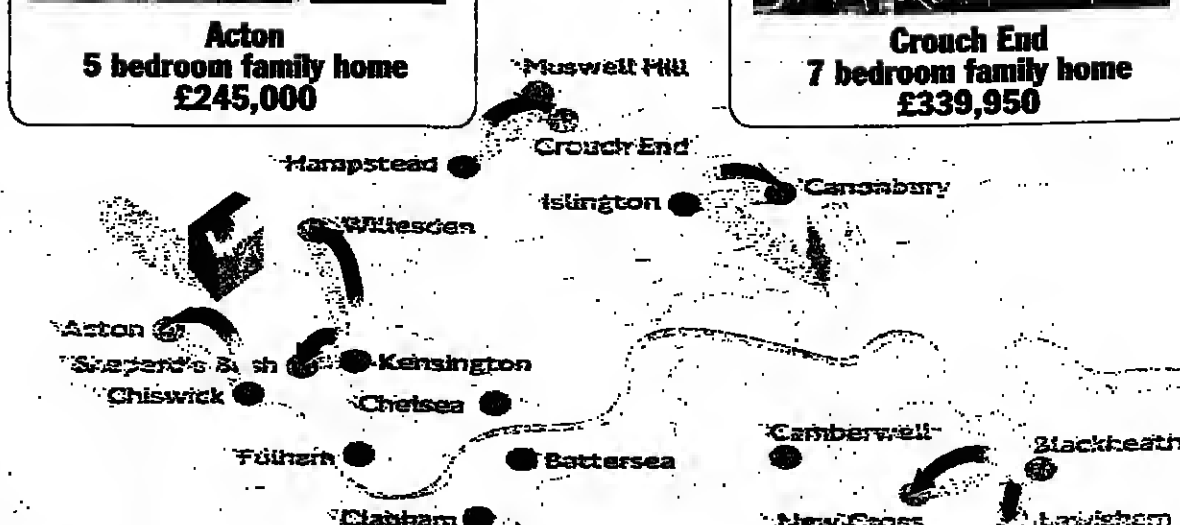
The Greenwich peninsula is an area full of potential, according to Yolande Barnes, who sees Greenwich offering a better quality of environment than the ever-popular Fulham. "You can pay three times more for safety, or ideally start a trend which could change the nature of an area. Good houses need pioneers."



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Mortar, mortar everywhere

... but just try buying somewhere to live in central London. Mary Dejevsky did – and failed

It never seems the right time to want to buy a flat in central London, but now seems an especially wrong time. Even with cash in hand, nothing to sell, and the most pressing desire to buy – not to make money, but to have somewhere to live – you attract more sympathy than enthusiasm from the capital's estate agents.

Either (in the case of W1, WC1, SW1) there is nothing on their books because no one is selling: "We didn't even bother to compile a list for January," they say, "there's nothing coming in." Or (W8, SW3, SW5) everyone is run off their feet showing flats around the clock. If you ring, there is no one in the office because they're all out with clients.

Any half-habitable flat is said to be "flying out of the window" even before anyone has had time to type out the details. "We're just so busy, it's wonderful for us," confided one receptionist against a cacophony of ringing phones. It's not so wonderful for us.

On the surface, London seems

to be back in the vicious circle of 1988: too little to buy, too many people chasing after it and everyone well into gawping mode. Perhaps it is worse. Last time, there was a temporary and quite specific reason for the frenzy: the new restrictions on mortgage interest tax relief. The bubble soon burst.

This time, the common wisdom is that we are experiencing the highest boom since the late Seventies. Interestingly, a dissenting voice comes from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors whose spokeswoman gives a number of reasons why an enduring boom is unlikely: the cautious budget, the election, a probable reduction in MIRAS and no change in stamp duty.

Estate agents and vendors understandably prefer the boom theory, which helps to explain our problems as buyers. Why should anyone sell their flat when they can expect another 15 per cent for it next year? And if they do sell, why should they settle for

anything less than a price that anticipates that rise? Whether people are prepared to buy at any price, just to have a stake in the supposedly rising market, is another matter. After a long weekend of concentrated flat viewing in central London, I was left with the suspicion that the current "boom" may be artificially fuelled by some estate agents and vendors and that it is not a real reflection of the market.

The agents concerned will object that the market drives itself, that any flat is worth just as much or as little as someone is prepared to pay for it, and that there is a real shortage of properties. All that is true. But it takes a genuine bidding situation and genuine information to judge what is a fair price, and not the feeble imaginings of the sale-hungry.

Taken to see a couple of flats last week that were still being renovated and not yet on the market, we were told that if we wanted to make an offer, "think of a number, the price hasn't been set yet".

We were effectively invited to take part in an auction with no reserve and no guide price. That's how hot the competition is supposed to be.

At another flat, also being renovated but advanced enough to have an asking price (though no printed details), we were told: "We've already had an offer at the asking price, but we haven't accepted it." The renovator (and owner) muttered in the background that he thought the asking price too high.

Some agents are shamelessly encouraging gawping. I was taken to see two flats in one block. One, at what seemed a very reasonable price, was under offer. The other, which seemed overpriced by comparison, was not. To the agent's horror, a family was waiting in the lobby (the family, it transpired, that thought it had bought the first flat). I was whisked past, rushed to the flat in question, raced around it (to be gone before the family arrived to measure up), then taken to the other flat.

A justification for this comedy might be the usefulness of comparing the size and price of the two flats. But the subsequent conversation contained a strong invitation to bid for the first flat, with the asking price "as a floor". Maybe the agent thought that the buyer, who wanted several flats in the block, would either increase his offer or switch to the more expensive flat – to the mutual benefit of agent and vendor.

The saga has a sequel. We made an offer for the larger flat, which was rejected. Spun tales of spiralling prices, vicious bidding for other flats in the area (but not for this one), we upped the offer. A misdirected fax subsequently made clear that, first, this was 10 per cent more than any similar flat in the block had ever fetched and, second, that the price had recently been de facto increased by the removal from the package of several parking spaces (hitherto included in the same price). We withdrew; the vendor, a

company, is prepared to wait. But the experience prompts some thoughts.

Perhaps the statutory duty on estate agents to provide accurate particulars should be augmented with a requirement to state when a flat was put on the market, at what price and on what terms. Ideally, the prices achieved at sale should be published, as they are in some countries. Then we buyers could judge the market for ourselves and not find ourselves unwittingly driving it.

And, contrary to what you may hear, there are central London flats on the market. Some of them have been there for a good many months now, unsold because of their poor condition, their high service charge or their less than ideal location. They are available because sellers and agents will not reduce the price, anticipating that the market will "rise to meet them". Maybe it will, but the fact that buyers are resisting shows that we still have a modicum of common sense.

Beyond the city limits

The London commuter strays a fair distance these days. Although the traditional stockbroker belt will always be prime territory for anyone who has to be at their desk sharpish, five days a week, flexible working, technology and improved transport links have allowed many people to go further afield.

Alison Dean, a director of estate agents Savills, has noticed that the received wisdom of a one-and-a-half-hour, door-to-door cut-off point has polarised: some commuters want to be at work within 45 minutes, others are prepared to travel for up to two hours. The three-day office week, with increasing numbers of people working partly from home, has made the long commute acceptable. "We find that if both partners work, the choice is to stay closer in. A couple will often move further out when the woman, say, decides to work part-time or from home," she says.

Clearly, improved rail and road links have opened up new areas. Only now is the effect of the electrification of the eastern line from King's Cross to Peterborough, a 45-minute trip, being felt. Rutland and Norfolk, very much second-home territory, are now becoming thinkable for regular commuters.

"Car travel is dead time, but people can get through a lot of work on the train. Regular commuters learn the tricks of the trade. They know where to stand on the platform to get a seat and how to stagger their journeys," says Alison Dean. Jim Ward, an analyst at Savills, lives in Cambridge and works in London. "We live in the heart of the city so I can cycle to the station. I spend an hour on the train and that is very useful time for reading and planning. Quite a few people use laptops. In that sense it is better to be an hour away than have a journey of half an hour while you are squashed into a carriage unable to do anything." It costs him just over £3,000 a year in fares but, he says, is worth it for the quality of life Cambridge affords.

The equation of moving out of London and saving money does not always add up. There is a premium to pay for homes in pretty Hampshire towns that have a fast rail service and the Surrey commuter belt is more expensive than many parts of London. But the northern London commuter belt is cheaper than Surrey. In Enfield, 19 miles from Peterborough, Savills is selling a Georgian school house for £185,000, which would be closer to £300,000 in Surrey. And a 17th-century house in the village of Wilby, two miles from Wellingborough, with a 50-minute run into St Pancras, has a guide price of £565,000, while in Surrey it would be between £700,000 and £800,000. Winchester, which 10 years ago was regarded as an outpost of commuter land, is a 55-minute journey to Waterloo. Mary-Anne Crafter, PR manager for Hamptons International, is a regular passenger. "Working on the train is the equivalent of three hours in the office. I can focus and am uninterrupted. It does get stressful if the trains are mucked about. I can only do it because my husband works locally and I have a brilliant nanny."

Ty Homes' development and refurbishment of Peninsula Barracks, in the centre of Winchester, has seen a number of young professional buyers. At the beginning of March, five homes in the last side of the square will be ready. The race is on between the empty-nesters and those with their eyes on the non-stop link to Waterloo.

Penny Jackson

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Beyond the city limits

For a moment – just one brief, tantalising moment – it looked as though there was going to be a large shock in the investment stakes this year. When the WM Company, which monitors fund managers' performance, took its first pass at analysing how well pension funds had done with their investments in 1996, it found what looked like startling evidence.

It seemed that those funds which were "actively managed" had come out on top again in the performance stakes.

The early returns suggested that while the FT All-share index last year produced a total return of 16.8 per cent, the average actively managed pension fund had achieved a return of 17.2 per cent, a small but significant advantage.

If confirmed, it would have meant that professional fund managers collectively had beaten the main stock market index for only the third time in the last 10 years. But alas, for the industry's self-

Why the markets outperform the professionals' managed funds most years



Jonathan Davis

esteem, the first cut proved to be a false signal. A month on, there has been time to collect and analyse the performance data further, and now the figures have had to be revised. WM, which monitors results from 80 per cent of the pension funds in this country, now calculates that the outcome last year was a dead heat. The pension funds in its survey produced a return of 16.8 per cent – exactly the same as the index itself had produced.

In historical terms, this was still quite an achievement. For ever

since professional fund managers started to analyse their performance in detail (which was not at that long ago), the message has almost invariably been the same. In any one year, the majority of professional fund managers are incapable of beating the main stock market indices.

And if that were not bad enough, the chances of any fund manager beating the index repeatedly over a period of years are much slimmer still.

The evidence on this point, as I have had cause to mention here

before, is quite incontrovertible. Every study that has been carried out into fund management performance, whether it is in the United States or here, and whether it is pension funds, unit trusts, investment trusts or whatever, arrives at roughly the same conclusion. This is that around 80 per cent of professionally managed funds will underperform the market as a whole each year.

WM's own data shows that 1992 was the only year in the last 10 when pension funds actually made a return greater than that of the index (though in 1994, they did manage to produce a smaller negative return than the index).

If you look at studies of individual fund management performance over time, the evidence is similarly clear-cut. Fund managers who appear in the top 25 per cent of performers in any five or 10-year period are more likely than not to be in the bottom half in the succeeding five or 10-year period. In fact, there is some evidence to support the view that

picking the worst performing fund management group is just as likely to produce above average performance in the future.

Credit for the first discovery of this painful truth about the fund management business is probably owed to a distinguished American philanthropist, Alfred Cowles, who demonstrated as long ago as 1933 that the returns achieved by insurance companies were no better or no worse than those which would have been generated by a randomly selected portfolio of stocks. But it has taken the advent of modern computers to demonstrate conclusively how persistent and relentless this phenomenon is.

When you think about it, of course, this finding is really not as surprising as it may seem. Fund managers collectively are the market, so it is inevitable that collectively they should be unable to beat the market index. The main reason they persistently fail even to match it, however, lies in the cost of their doing business –

their management fees on the one hand and all the money they put into the pockets of stockbrokers when they buy and sell the shares in their portfolio.

While the average fund manager cannot beat the stock market, many individual fund managers can – and do. In the pension fund field, the top quartile of performers typically produce a return that is between 2 per cent and 6 per cent greater than the market as a whole.

Something similar happens in the unit trust and investment trust industry, although most cases of outperformance are due more to the particular sector or country that the trust has chosen to invest in, rather than the stock selection skills of the manager in question.

What is odd is that it has taken so long for investors to arrive at the obvious conclusion – that it may not be worth trying to beat the stock market index any more. Naturally, everybody wants to see their fund in the top half of the performance tables – pension

fund trustees are just as dogmatic about that as the average investor. But is it sensible to set that as a target? As there is now a practical alternative, in the shape of index-tracking funds, whose sole *raison d'être* is to mimic the returns on the index, without any pretensions to beating the market averages, the question needs careful consideration.

Not for nothing do WM now estimate that between 20 per cent and 25 per cent of pension fund money is now "passively" managed – ie invested in index-tracking funds. In the United States, the figure is more like 40 per cent. It is the inevitable consequence of taking a long, hard look at the facts of past performance.

Now that ordinary investors have a chance to put their money into an index-tracking fund too – there are already over a dozen such funds in this country – the question to ask is not whether you should think about them as an investor, but why you should even think of opting for anything else.

The cat's share tips

Paul Slade opens the lid on a feline financier's portfolio

Had you been standing in my kitchen on 13 August last year, you would have found me carefully laying out pieces of dry cat food on to a grid of 250 numbered squares.

Despite appearances, there was a point to this. When the grid was complete I let a cat named Schrödinger loose in the kitchen and noted the 35 pieces which he ate first. These numbers, matched up against a list of shares in the FTSE mid-250, went to make up what I call the Consolidated Accumulation Trust portfolio – or CAT, for short.

The shares which Schrödinger selected included household names such as The Body Shop, Dalgety, Northern Foods, Rascal, Savoy Hotels and Taylor Walker. He also went for a few more adventurous picks such as media group Flextech, healthcare specialists ML Laboratories and Mercury World Mining, an investment trust.

As far as sector split is concerned, Schrödinger went for six investment trusts, three media companies, three construction companies, two engineering firms and two transport companies. Not to mention a smattering of power, drinks, distribution and financial services. A sample of the stocks he picked is given in the table alongside this article.

So, six months on, how are Schrödinger's skills as an investment manager holding up?

A friendly unit trust group

– far too modest to have its name bandied around here – has put the portfolio on the computer for me, assuming an initial investment of £10,000 in each company's shares. For the purposes of this exercise, we've deducted a broker's commission of £1,053 at the outset, but ignored all other charges.

In the six months since its creation, CAT's value has grown by 3.05 per cent, against a figure of 4.06 per cent for the mid-250 index. But this conceals a dramatic upswing in the last quarter. In the three months to 4 February this year, the fund has grown by 4.4 per cent, nearly double the mid-250's advance of 2.3 per cent.

Even the six-month figures rank Schrödinger ahead of my real-life fund managers. It is not a foolproof comparison by any means, but Micropal's figures for UK Growth unit trusts over the same period (bid-to-bid, ignoring income) show the sector average at 10.1 per cent. CAT is ranked at 156 in a field of 164.

Among Schrödinger's big successes, other than his top-five selection, are also the Cowie Group, which saw its share price rise 15.9 per cent in the past six months, Taylor Woodrow, whose shares have benefited from the housing market recovery to the tune of 13.8 per cent, and Electra Investment Trust, up 11.8 per cent.

Admittedly, there are some poor selections. Bulmer Holdings is down 6.7 per cent, while Wimpey has dropped 6.2 per cent and Highland Distilleries shares have lost 3.9 per cent of their value in six months.

This still puts Schrödinger comfortably ahead of managers of trusts such as Barclays Unicorn Leisure (+4.3 per cent), Equitable Life Special Situations (+4.1 per cent), M&G Recovery (+3.8 per cent) and GT UK Growth (+3.5 per cent).

An M&G spokeswoman is



unabashed at Schrödinger's success relative to her company's fund: "Don't be so catty," she retorts. "Our Recovery Fund has outperformed the FT All-share index over every 15-year period since its launch in 1969. "If we were to hire Schrödinger as a fund manager after that kind of performance we might be faced with a large number of early redemptions from our fund."

It's still early days, of course, but I think we can consider that a reasonably promising start for our four-legged financier. We'll be returning to CAT every three months or so in the future to see how he's getting on.

Many investment plans, like Virgin's PEP, are based not on actively managed funds, but on "tracker trusts".

Trackers have the advantage of eliminating the risk that the

market as a whole will go up, but your own fund manager's succeeds in picking the few stocks that are falling.

Active fund managers are relaxed about tracker trusts as most companies will have one in their selection of funds. How they will react to being outperformed by an investment expert whose only remuneration – unlike theirs – is the occasional tin of Sheba remains to be seen.

Schrödinger's investment performance

Company	Sector	6-month change
1 Flextech	Media	+40.72%
2 United Friendly	Insurance	+28.4%
3 St James's Place	Financial	+26.6%
4 Flextech	Building materials	+19.4%
5 Northern Foods	Food	+16.4%
31 Spinx-Saxel	Engineering	-8.5%
32 Warrington Holdings	Paper & packaging	-8.7%
33 Rascal	Electronics	-11.3%
34 Mercury World Mining	Investment trust	-15.5%
35 ML Laboratories	Healthcare	-32.4%

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Chinese wares

Collect to invest: John Windsor on pot luck

Chinese porcelain pots, plates and plaques painted by Mr Zhai Xiaodang (pronunciation instructions later) will be the most tantalising bargains at the Olympia Fine Art and Antiques Fair when it opens on 25 February. He will be there demonstrating his skill - the first Chinese senior master to visit the West and the only one still painting birds, flowers and bamboo in the traditional imperial manner.

Tantalising? Collector-investors will have to assess not only rarity value but taste. Other people's taste, not just their own.

The importer is Peter Wain, respected Shropshire dealer in oriental ceramics, committed Sinoophile since his army days in Hong Kong in the late Sixties, and a master of Chinese etiquette: always accept a business card with both hands and read it before pocketing it, burst rather than give in to a sneeze, and keep hands away from face.

He will be escorting 53-year-old Mr Zhai (pronounced *jai* *hsiaodang* by those capable of saying b at the back of the throat) on a tour of the Stoke on Trent potteries.

His studio is not in the booming Shanghai economic zone, but at the imperial porcelain capital in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province - where the windows of the battered Lada taxis are wedged shut with screwdrivers.

A year's output by Mr Zhai will be offered for sale at Olympia - another stipulation by Chinese officials. It consists of some 50 pieces, with price tags totalling £60,000. A six-inch high vase decorated with birds and flowers that took him three



Imperial masterpiece: Traditional-style porcelain

PHOTOGRAPH: CRAIG EASTON

days to paint is £500. Flower vases 15-inches high (two to four weeks), £2,000-£3,000.

Hitherto, Mr Zhai's wares have not been sold in home-land China but reserved for export, almost exclusively to dealers in Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Supply is static. Of the eight senior masters in Jingdezhen, Mr Zhai is the only one who paints the meticulously precise flora and fauna. It will be decades before his apprentice becomes a senior master - and what style will he adopt then?

Mr Wain has introduced the more adventurous of his British customers - eight to 10 of them - to works by senior masters of the Twenties and Thirties (also to be shown on his stand at Olympia). But will they take to pots on which the

paint is hardly dry? Since 1939 virtually no masterworks have been made.

The Japanese invasion and subsequent civil war stopped production for 15 years from 1939. Some retraining of master-craftsmen took place in the Fifties but during the Cultural Revolution (1968-78) signed works were ordered to be destroyed.

Well, will Westerners like contemporary imperial-style porcelain decoration enough to buy it? Mr Wain and I went in search of Mr Zhai's saucer-plate with fish. If Mr Wain were selling it, which he is not, he would ask £1,500.

But, offered in a different context - you might pass it by, assuming it was mass-produced transfer-printed stuff.

"Would you pay £1,500 for

that?" asked Mr Wain, provocatively. "It's a lot of money for people to hand out for something they've not seen before. They will need to appreciate not only the rarity but the artistry of it."

Which explains why Mr Wain is not asking double the price for his board. "I don't want to frighten people off," he says. "But these ceramics won't be offered at this price again. Frankly, I feel quite hushy. I might be creating a market I can't satisfy."

Olympia Fine Art and Antiques Fair: National Hall, Kensington High Street, London, 25 February to 2 March. Entry £5. (0171-370 8188/8186/8234).

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John Whiting

Or you may wish to spread your risk. Venture capital trusts (VCTs) are springing up which offer opportunities for some income tax relief at 20 per cent on your investment. They also

The catch is you have to do it carefully — there is always a risk you end up with a broken egg rather than a rabbit when you reach into the top hat to retrieve your investment.

Last year, Stephen Dorrell, the Health Minister, proposed

in that contributions to them are tax-deductible and the investments grow in a tax free

\$13,000 net of basic tax. An impaired life annuity, perhaps because he has suffered a stroke, will pay \$21,000 a year, Mr Aaron points out.

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[illegible]

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Our Select Accounts Terms and Conditions and **Charges** will not thereby become entitled to vote on and to receive the dividend or interest payable on the investment concerned. However, where they satisfy the relevant conditions, "lower rate band" investments will continue to qualify for relief from charge, unless the tax deducted exceeds an investor's tax liability on the investment. Where the tax deducted will exceed their liability to tax, we will have to pay additional tax on the interest to cover the prevailing basic savings rate. Interest is not paid on balances held for less than 90 days. The loan facility is available if it is open to permanent UK residents. Full written terms and conditions are available on request. The minimum investment by ship will usually be sent to you within five full working days after completion of your application. The maximum investment per annum is £10,000. Minimum holding with the company is 6 months.

Rates are contract at 20.137 per cent. The circumstances under which the rates may vary are described in our Select Accounts Terms and Conditions and Charges letter, it is important that you understand what interest rate will be selected by the relevant Account as we will be levying members of the Society. They will not thereby become entitled to any refund or compensation from the Society's proposed conversion to a publicly listed company listed on the London Stock Exchange, unless they satisfy the relevant conditions set out in the notice of intention to convert. A deduction of income tax at the lower rate (currently 20%) up to, subject to the required contribution, grow. Where the tax deducted exceeds an investor's tax liability (if any), a claim may be made against HM Revenue & Customs for a refund of the overpaid tax. However, if the account holder has no other UK tax liabilities, they will have no claim for a refund. If they do have other UK tax liabilities, they will have no more than to pay on it. Individuals who are liable at the higher rate of income tax of 40% will have no pay additional tax on the interest and the tax deducted and the higher rate tax due. Account balances below £10,000 will receive interest at the prevailing bank, savings rate. Interest is paid on balances below £20, unless the account holder is registered as being married or years of age. The account is for personal use only and cannot be used for investment purposes. Full written terms and conditions will be sent to you upon opening your account. Please note that contributions must be made by direct credit transfer to the relevant account number. Contributions must be made to the relevant Account. Opening an account is subject to scrutiny and identification will be required. Minimum investment £10,000. Minimum holding period with the Society £500,000.

No need to be confused

The principle is simple – just tax-free investment. Tony Lyons and Ken Welsby explain

If you pay income tax, then personal equity plans are the best choice for long-term savings since they offer the returns from stock market investment free of all tax.

Today, some 60 per cent of the total amount invested in PEPs is looked after by unit trust managers while nearly 10 per cent is accounted for by investment trusts.

Yet many investors are still confused about PEPs, according to research carried out for National Westminster by Research Surveys of Great Britain.

This showed that 22 per cent of the population have considered buying a PEP but four in 10 of those thought that they were "complicated", while one in five thought that "getting information on them is not easy".

As Brian Tora points out elsewhere on this page, a PEP is a package which holds the investment – usually in the form of shares.

Single company PEPs are the easiest to understand as the money has to be invested in the shares of just one company. These are often used by companies which promote share ownership by employees and those which actively encourage private investors.

For example, many of those who were members of Abbey National when it was a building society are now its shareholders, and their ranks were swollen last year by about half a million former National & Provincial members who sold their society to the Abbey in return for shares.

If you were one of the lucky

ones, holding those shares in Abbey's own PEP means that you enjoy the income and capital growth free of tax.

In this context, there are a couple of points to note. First, remember that you can invest in a new PEP in every tax year, and secondly, in addition to the £6,000 limit on general PEP investments, you can save a further £3,000 in a single company PEP.

So if you have some spare cash now – say from a Tessa which has matured – you can invest it in a 1996/97 PEP before 5 April. Then, if you do collect windfall shares in the next tax year, you can put those in your 1997/98 PEP and again collect the earnings tax-free. Although you may not collect the full £3,000 on conversion, you will be able to top up your holding if you still want a stake in the business.

Also straightforward is the concept of self-select PEPs. These are the original form of PEP, and are mainly for the sophisticated investor who – usually with the help of a stockbroker – selects a portfolio of shares administered by the chosen manager.

So-called "execution-only" stockbrokers also offer self-select PEPs. But in view of the risks, you must remember not to invest money that you cannot afford to lose.

But of the 1,000 or so different PEP plans available, the great majority are packaged plans which invest in ordinary stocks and shares via unit and investment trusts.

Most funds are straightforward equity investments – buying shares



On the recovery trail: Some funds buy shares in companies that have suffered setbacks

in a spread of companies which have either been selected individually on their merits or because their performance is measured by an index the fund is trying to track.

Some groups offer a fund of funds, whereby investment is in a range of trusts in the manager's stable. Some invest in smaller companies.

A number of management groups such as M&G and Fidelity have trusts specialising in recovery situations. These buy shares in companies that were once high flyers and then suffered a difficult time, but where the managers expect them to recover strongly. Others invest in a mixture of UK and overseas shares.

Recent years have seen some new types of PEP introduced, including funds which invest in corporate bonds and those which offer some form of guaranteed performance.

Corporate bond PEPs offer a means of securing a high income. They have been used largely as a means of boosting the earnings of those at or near retirement. There are now nearly 60 such plans available, mainly offered by unit trust managers, which look after some £3.3bn. They usually secure high dividends by investing in debentures, loan stocks and similar assets.

Another growth area has been the use of various guarantees to protect the investment in PEPs. Some offer a straightforward guarantee of a full return of capital after a fixed period irrespective of the state of the stock market. Typical was a recent offer from Barclays which promised the full return of capital after five years or the percentage growth in the FTSE 100, whichever was the higher.

Other managers, including Scottish Widows, offer funds where any gains are locked in but which limit

losses by setting a minimum unit price at various periods, usually each quarter or year.

These funds normally levy higher than average charges and offer protection at the price of some falling off in performance. In order to provide the guarantees, they usually have to invest in a mixture of ordinary shares, fixed interest stocks and derivatives such as futures. The latter is a means of paying a fee today to buy or sell a share in the future at a fixed price.

Whatever the type of packaged PEP you choose, the underlying fund should always be examined to make sure it fits with the investor's long-term investment aims. But always remember that, like any other stock market investment, the value of your investment will rise and fall in line with company and stock market performance.

It's that time of the year again



Brian Tora

Hey-ho me hearties! The PEP selling season is upon us! And if that sounds aggressively swashbuckling, just look at the number of advertisements for PEPs, or sift through the reconstituted acres of forest that will have been pouring through your letterbox during the past few weeks.

The exultation is to Buy! Buy! Buy! But should you? My view is that of the typical economist. "On the one hand... and on the other."

Let us start with a bit of history. PEPs are 10-years old next month. Like many in the stockbroking community, I was slow to come round to their attraction.

But history has shown that PEPs were indeed a good idea. Since their launch, share prices have trebled and it is not unusual to find someone who has borrowed into their savings on a regular basis to top up their PEP pile with portfolios now worth £100,000-plus.

But what exactly is a PEP? It stands for personal equity plan. I hope I do not appear condescending. It is just that we seem to have forgotten that a PEP is not a product. It is simply an envelope into which other forms of savings and investment are put, which makes them invisible to the taxman. This is where PEPs really come into their own.

Did you know that the responsibility for ensuring that all the niceties for the Inland Revenue are observed lies with your plan manager? You do not have to enter a PEP on your tax

return. Not its purchase, or its sale, or any of the changes that take place during its life.

PEP has become a word in its own right. I expect to hear it adopted into the Oxford English Dictionary at any moment. The fact that you can now buy corporate bond PEPs is a clear sign that people have forgotten their origins. Corporate bond equities? The very idea!

I come back to the fact that PEPs are viewed as a product – particularly by those trying to sell them. I believe they should be viewed for what they are – personal equity plans. In other words, an incentive to buy ordinary shares direct.

Now, most PEPs that are sold are just unit trusts or other collective investments by another name. Still, it is wise to remember that these collective funds, for all their attractions, are not usually a cheap way of accessing the market.

If there is a high front-end charge, the effect can be to offset the tax advantages for many years to come.

But do not let me put you off. Anyone who has a share portfolio should be steadily transferring it into the PEP pot. And if you are unable to make adequate pension contributions, then a PEP is a good stand-by.

As to which PEP to buy. Well, if you are an investor with a reasonable amount of capital at your disposal, I still favour the direct equity approach.

After all, a husband and wife can put £18,000 in now and another £18,000 immediately after the end of the tax year in April – something we should all consider carefully if a general election is in the offing.

That £36,000 can buy you a reasonable spread of risk. And if chosen carefully, the charges should be most competitive.

Brian Tora is chairman of the investment strategy committee at Greig Middleton.

PEPs

"Do you want a FT-SE Top 100 tracker PEP from a FT-SE Top 100 company?"

67%* tax free growth
This is how much the FTSE 100 Share Index has grown in the five years to December 1996. So a PEP which tracks the index can offer a worthwhile option to medium and long term investors.

The Guardian Direct Top 100 tracker PEP

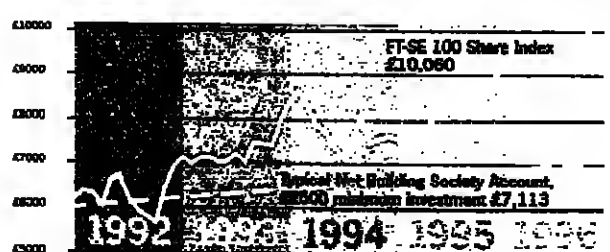
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With the UK's top 100 companies
The FTSE 100 Share Index means the largest UK companies quoted on the Stock Exchange – which includes many household names that you will recognise.

Don't lose your tax free allowance
If you've not taken a PEP this tax year act now – after 5 April you'll have lost your 1996/97 tax free allowance. Regular savings application – minimum £30 a month – must be received by 28 February. Lump sum applications – minimum £1,000 – by 5 April.

* Source: Micropal
† Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. The value of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up.



Growth of the FTSE 100 Share Index against a typical Building Society Account, £2500 minimum investment. Source: Micropal 13.12.96. Offer to open prices. Gross Reinvestment, based on UK Sterling, calculation: lump sum (£6000).

The information reflects our understanding of current legislation and tax regulations which are both subject to change.

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* Source: Micropal Ltd, based on 1991 to 1996 prices. Note: 1.3.91-27.1.97, the UK Stockmarket Fund grew by 113.1% with income reinvested.

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Income or growth? High risks or security?
Abigail Montrose advises on choosing a plan

It's easy to give yourself a headache when it comes to finding the right PEP, since there are more than 1,200 from which to choose - a figure that does not include self-select schemes in which you make your own investment decisions.

Whether you are a first-time buyer or a seasoned investor, you should think carefully before deciding which scheme to invest in this tax year.

The first thing to consider is what you want from your PEP - are you looking for income or capital growth?

If you want an income, you should check what the manager hopes to achieve, how often you will be paid and if you can vary the level of income you take.

If you are looking for a high income, such as 8 per cent a year, you cannot expect your PEP to achieve much capital growth. High income seekers tend to be steered towards corporate bond PEPs, although many general PEPs also invest primarily for income.

Those in search of capital growth should look for a PEP with this as their main objective. Next, you should consider how much risk you are prepared to take. The greater the risk the higher the potential rewards. As the table shows, however, the average growth from many PEPs is far higher than returns on sums left in a building society.

There are some PEPs which give the option of taking variable amounts of income or leaving the capital to grow. The GA PEP offers a choice of two unit trusts - income and growth - which allow income to be taken. But the income may also be reinvested.

Some investment sectors are more risky than others. Funds investing in new small companies have a higher risk profile than funds which invest in a wide range of large well-established companies. Similarly, a single company PEP - where you are relying on the performance of just one company - can be more hazardous

than investing in a general PEP.

Next you need to decide if you want to manage the investments in your PEP or if you want to buy them ready-packaged in a fund. Some managers offer self-select PEPs.

Once you have narrowed the choice down you should start to look at the individual performance of PEP funds, as it does give some indication of how successful a fund manager has been in the past.

You also should consider the quality of the PEP manager. Does the investment house have a good track record across its whole range

of funds? Sometimes it will be down to a single "star" manager - if that one individual were to leave how would the fund fare?

The volatility of funds also is important. Some funds grow steadily, others can rise and fall dramatically in value. So if you are not of a strong constitution this type of fund may not be for you.

Microcap, the fund analyst, gives funds a volatility rating based on past performance. If you are considering a volatile fund, be sure to invest only money which you will not need at short notice because you do not want to have to cash in

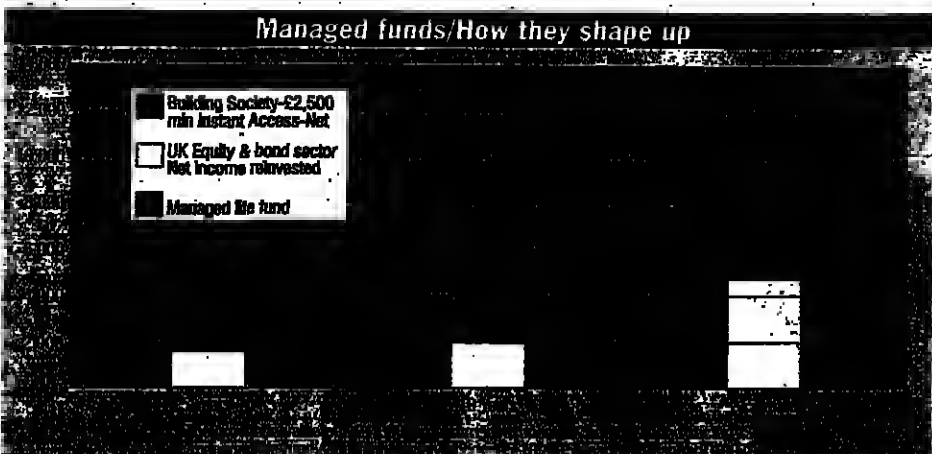
your investment while the fund is on a downward spiral.

Charges vary between schemes. Self-select PEPs and others where the underlying fund invests in all or most of the shares of a particular index - known as trackers - have low charges. Where the fund is actively managed, costs are likely to be higher.

While it may be tempting to opt for a PEP with low charges, you should never use this as the sole factor for choosing a PEP. As the tax year draws to a close, many PEP managers offer discounts on their PEP charges to try to attract last minute business.

Many of the big fund managers attract your business directly from advertisements like those on these pages. But there are other ways to invest in a tax-free plan, including the PEP "boutiques" or discount shops which offer a range of plans, including those from well-known investment houses. These discount brokers work on commission and win business by splitting this commission with their customers in the form of a discount on the fund manager's charges.

Discount brokers receive commission for every PEP they sell. So even if you come across a plan with no initial charges, such as M&G and Fidelity's no-fee PEPs, you may still be able to get these cheaper by going through a discount broker.



Hard Labour softens

Abigail Montrose weighs up change at the top

PEPs have been one of the success stories of the decade, but how safe would these tax-free investments be under a Labour government?

In recent months there has been speculation that if the Labour Party were to win the general election it would shake up the PEP regulations. It has been suggested that a Labour government might limit the tax relief on PEPs to the basic rate of tax, and that it is considering setting a maximum level to the overall amount that can be sheltered from tax through a PEP.

In recent weeks the party has moved to allay these fears. Mike O'Brien, Labour's shadow economic secretary, has dismissed the rumours as "rubbish", while in a recent interview Alistair Darling, shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, said that the Labour Party had always supported the PEP regime and had no plans to change it.

Both the Association of Unit Trust and Investment Funds, and the Association of Investment Trusts have said that they see no reason to think the Labour Party

will change the PEP rules. Many in the investment world support this view. Tony Wood, marketing director at Virgin Direct, believes Labour is committed to keeping personal equity plans.

"It makes perfect sense. The hordes of people who have invested in PEPs over the last 10 years are exactly the same audience that Labour is appealing to," he says.

Paul Ashby, marketing manager at Barclays Bank, thinks Labour is as committed to PEPs.

"I don't think the Labour Party has a problem with the principle of PEPs. But they might decide there's a better way to offer tax incentives as a way to save and invest," he says.

In fact, a recent speech by Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, hinted at the possibility of a new scheme being launched, offering tax relief to long-term investors.

Many investors are still concerned about the implications of a possible Labour victory in the polls as a survey by Gavin Anderson & Co, a firm of

communications consultants, illustrates.

Of the 600 unit trust investors surveyed, 37 per cent said they thought a Labour election victory might harm investment prospects in the sector.

On the other hand, a survey of floating voters published this week by the FT and the advertising agency FCB suggests that Labour is no longer seen as a party that would tax the public more significantly than the Tories.

While some investors are obviously nervous at the prospect of a Labour government, the investment industry is ambivalent.

As Ian Overage, marketing manager at Flemings, points out: "Historically, markets have not underperformed under a Labour government - compared with a Conservative government over the full five-year period".

In fact, the biggest fall on the stock market was between 1972 and 1973 when the market fell in value by around 75 per cent under a Conservative government, he notes.

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Keeping up with the Footsie

While PEPs may have been born a decade ago, they did not really come of age until 1992 when collective funds such as unit trusts first became eligible for the full general PEP allowance.

Since then an increasing number of fund management groups have promoted the idea of funds which track the various stock market indices.

Over 10 per cent of the near £30bn invested in all PEPs has gone into tracker funds and new ones are being launched all the time, the latest coming from National Westminster.

An investment cliché is the "75 per cent rule", which states that in any given year, 75 per cent of all fund managers underperform the FTSE 100 index – the 100 largest UK companies in terms of market capitalisation.

Therefore, why not simply invest in all the companies that make up the FTSE 100? The most common trackers

follow either the FTSE 100 or the more widely based FTSE All-share index.

The GA Blue Chip Tracking Trust, launched last month by General Accident, one of the UK's top life companies, is among those tracking the FTSE 100.

Some of the 30 funds available, however, aim to match non-UK indices. One such example comes from Norwich Union, which aims to track the performance of a global index. Others can track a European index, Wall Street's Dow Jones or Japan's Nikkei.

Over the year to the beginning of February 1997, the FTSE 100 rose 18.9 per cent gross, while the All-share rose 17.2 per cent. Surprisingly, only four of the 23 tracker funds in existence for the whole of this period came within 1 percentage point of this. This is partially explained by the charges levied by the managers.

In a fiercely competitive market, the cost of investing in an index-tracking fund is very

low. Most charge nothing for initial investment and between 0.5 and 1 per cent for the annual management charge. The GA PEP, for example, levies no initial or exit charges and a 1 per cent annual fee.

Over the year, the best performing tracker fund was the largest: Virgin's UK Index Tracking – which looks after some £400m in PEP funds – rose 16.85 per cent. This was closely followed by Fidelity's MoneyBuilder Index, which went up 16.8 per cent.

Another reason funds fail to match the stock markets is that they invest in either a partial selection of the companies in the index or in the more volatile futures market of those shares.

Why then invest in actively managed PEP funds? Typically, they charge around 3 to 5 per cent for the initial purchase of units and around 1 per cent for the annual charge.

If longer-term performance is looked at, good actively managed funds easily outper-

form the index. Over the last five years, the FTSE 100 has doubled in value. More than 50 UK growth and income, or just growth funds, have beaten this and Fidelity's Recovery fund, the top performer, has almost trebled in value.

Active fund management comes into its own when markets are volatile or falling.

A good tracker fund is a reasonable first PEP investment for the novice investor. Long term, it will show reasonable performance when measured against the average fund. But to outperform the stock market a good actively managed fund can give a better result.

Tony Lyons

The Independent has published a 32-page guide to PEPs, sponsored by General Accident Life. Written by Steve Lodge, it explains the difference between tracker funds and actively managed PEPs. For your free copy, call 0500 125888 or fill in the coupon on page 30.



Global options: Funds that track the performance of Japan's Nikkei index are available

PHOTOGRAPH: AFP

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Charging into hidden costs

From the trenches, Simon Read assesses the price war

As we approach the end of the tax year, the PEP providers go into overdrive offering better deals to attract new investors.

Today Perpetual, one of the leading fund managers, is launching a World Income Fund PEP with a discount of 2 per cent, reducing the initial charge to 3.25 per cent. But these kinds of offers are short term – Perpetual's discount lasts until just 28 February – and are designed to attract clients in the busiest PEP season of the year.

Behind the launch offers and end of tax-year deals, however, there has been a real price war going on.

Now it's possible to pick up a PEP and pay no initial charges with the likes of Virgin Direct and Legal & General. PEPs from these companies have even reduced annual management charges to around 0.5 per cent. So why does the most popular PEP manager, Perpetual, want to keep its front-end charge of 5.25 per cent and annual management fees of 1.5 per cent?

Because its performance has been so good in the past,

Perpetual feels that there are plenty of investors who are happy to buy into those potentially higher returns.

A specialist fund can present greater risks and the novice or conservative investor may be happy with the average returns an index-tracker fund promises. Then it's simply a question of choosing on price – but you do need to check if there are any exit charges.

Some PEP managers, such as M&G, have done away with initial charges only to introduce sliding scales of fees if you close the PEP within five years.

Alternatively, you could contact a discount shop which offers a range of PEPs, including plans from well-known investment houses.

Many brokers offer cash-back or promise to undercut their rivals. The PEP Shop in Nottingham promises to beat any other broker's deal on a particular PEP, while Wolverhampton-based PEP Direct, promises to be 5 per cent cheaper than any other broker. PEP Direct charges a flat 2.5 per cent for any PEP purchase, and offers full cashback discounts.

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A more constant return

Simon Read looks at corporate bonds

Eighteen months ago, tax rules were changed to allow the introduction of corporate bond PEPs, a new investment opportunity under the tax-free umbrella. These plans represent a much lower risk than a general equity-based PEP as they invest in fixed-interest bonds and other securities.

The key point about such investments is that their returns are constant – unlike equities, where returns depend on stock market performance. For that reason they are often aimed at people who have shied away from PEPs, preferring the relative safety of a building society or bank.

Corporate bond PEPs can be ideal for those looking for high income with no need for capital growth, but it would be a mistake to underestimate the risks attached to this type of investment.

In effect they are fixed-interest bonds issued by companies to raise money. The companies pay interest on their bonds and repay the capital at a pre-set date. Investors are therefore lending a company money for a fixed time and receiving interest on the loan until it is paid back. Convertibles, which are also allowed in a corporate bond PEP, are similar vehicles in that they offer a fixed rate of interest,

but they also offer investors the chance to convert their option into shares.

For that reason they offer lower returns than corporate bonds, but do offer the extra potential of enjoying the capital growth associated with equities.

Corporate bonds and convertibles are generally bought by fund managers so private investors can join the game through these managers' unit trusts. It's a game worth playing as yields, the return you get from your investment, can be 7-8 per cent with corporate bonds, compared with 3-4 per cent with equities.

There are often two yields quoted on corporate bond PEPs: the running yield and the gross redemption yield. The first relates to the current estimated level of income you can expect from the fund, but this can be misleading because it takes no account of any capital gains or losses. The second figure gives a better indication of the return on your investment as it takes into account gains or losses on capital, as well as income.

Comparing the redemption yield with the running yield may, in fact, reveal that the gross return of the fund may fall over time, particularly if the running yield is much higher.

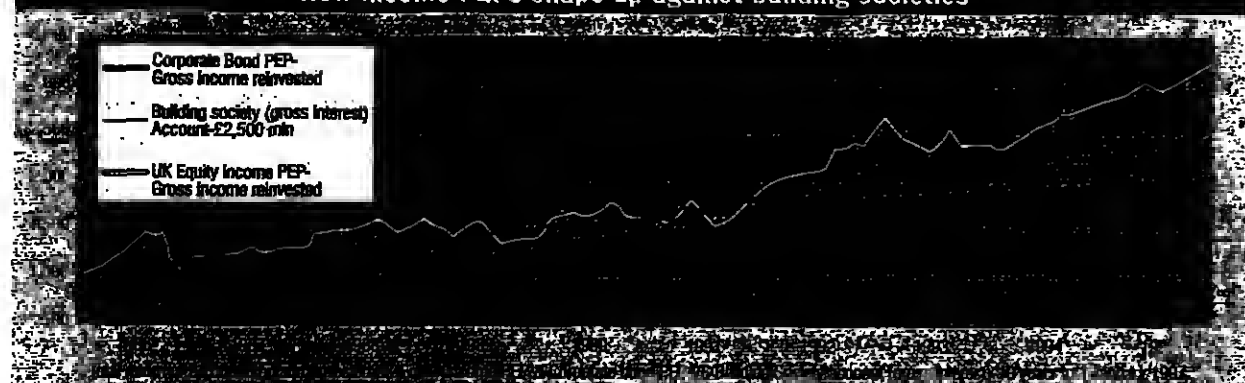
How should you choose a corporate bond PEP? Obviously the yield is something to consider but charges should also be taken into account. This is because charges have a much greater effect on corporate bond PEPs than general PEPs as your capital is unlikely to be growing.

There is a handful of companies that make no initial charge on one or more of their corporate bond PEPs. They include Fidelity, Guinness, Hight, Jarvis, M&G, Save & Prosper, Sun Alliance and Virgin Direct. However, not all of these PEPs are particularly highly rated by the experts.

The Allenbridge Group, a firm of specialist performance analysts, rates corporate bond PEPs according to the level of income offered, allied to fluctuations in the market value and in conjunction with the underlying yield. Its three top-rated funds are the Barclays Unicorn Income Manager, Commercial Union PPT Monthly Income Plus and HTR Preference and Bond.

The Independent is offering a 'Free Guide to PEPs', written by Steve Lodge, personal finance editor at The Independent on Sunday. The 32-page guide, sponsored by G4 Life, is available by calling 0500 125888, or filling in the coupon on page 30.

How income PEPs shape up against building societies



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Authorised unit trusts and investment trusts must hold at least 50 per cent of their funds in such investments.

Shares in companies registered in the UK or any other EU member state and

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Single company PEPs – which have a separate £3,000 limit – can invest only in the ordinary shares of a single EU company (excluding investment trusts).

If your PEP invests in com-

qualifying assets – those not listed above – the investment limit for each tax year is £1,500 rather than £6,000.

Corporate bond PEPs can invest in debentures, preference shares and convertibles.

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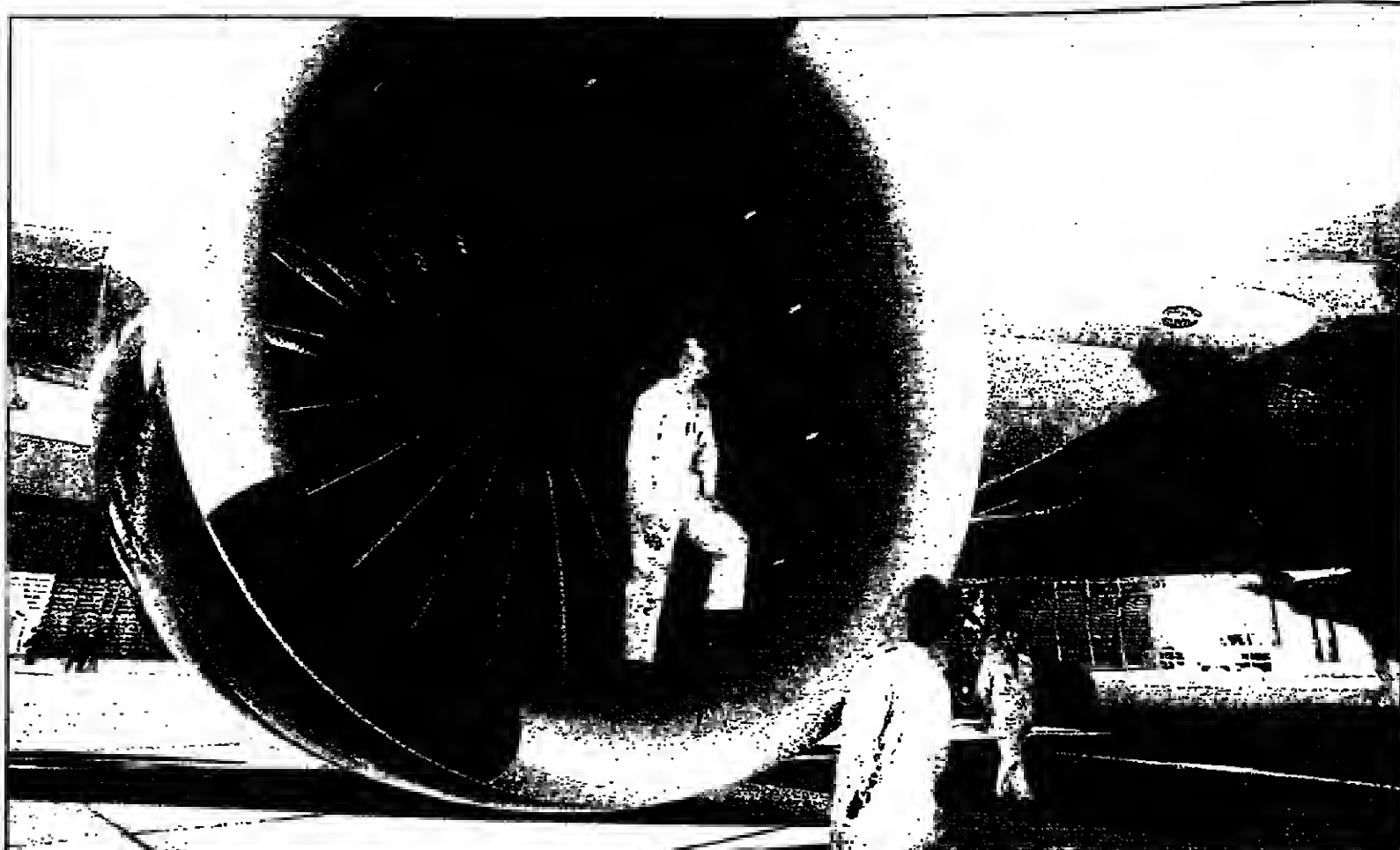
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Pick 'n' mix portfolios

Ken Welsby examines self-select schemes

When personal equity plans first appeared, the objective was simple: to give Sid a perk. For those too young to recall the "tell Sid" campaign with which British Gas was privatised, the aim was to offer tax incentives to individuals investing in shares.

The idea was that people would buy shares through stockbrokers and hold them in PEPs, rather than directly, so escaping tax on the earnings. In this way, reasoned the experts, the public, busy buying into privatisations such as British Airways, would support wider share ownership – and thus, as one commentator put it, "become increasingly engaged by capitalism".

Of course, it hasn't exactly turned out that way. As the

rules have changed over the years to allow investors to put the full PEP allowance into managed funds, the original concept of a tax shelter for individual share stakes has been overshadowed by the billions pouring into the packaged investment products.

But for those who want to build their own portfolio, the self-select PEP still has strong attractions. The annual limits – broadly, no more than £6,000 in a general PEP plus a further £3,000 in a single company plan – still apply, and the tax benefits are the same, but the mechanics are slightly different from the packaged product.

You still need a PEP manager – a bank or broker who is authorised to collect and pay your earnings tax-free – and this has to be paid for.

There are not normally any set-up charges, but there are annual charges, and you have to pay dealing charges on each transaction.

Annual charges can range from less than £50 to £250, so it pays to look carefully, and there are also variations in dealing costs. The largest managers of self-select PEPs are Barclays, Lloyds and ShareLink, all of which offer special rates for share stakes being bought into a PEP.

Lloyds Bank's Choice PEP, for example, offers what's probably the cheapest share dealing service in the country at just half of 1 per cent – a third of normal commissions. But there are a couple of snags.

This special rate applies only to 150 of the most popular shares and your orders will

be "hulked" with those of other customers, and dealt only on alternate Thursdays. So this service would not really be suitable for volatile shares, or at times of uncertainty in the markets generally.

If you want normal "best price" dealing for your PEP, Lloyds' standard rates are 1.5 per cent, with a minimum of £18.50 and a maximum of £75.

ShareLink charges a similar 1.5 per cent commission, but the minimum and maximum rates are £20 and £37.50 – and you can also use their PEP to subscribe to new issues for an extra charge of £10.

Active investors should take the time to study the company's annual report and accounts – and might consider attending the annual meeting. ShareLink charges £10

for these services and some operators charge more.

You can also use a self-select PEP to shelter existing share stakes – by having your broker sell them and then buy them back into the plan. The process is similar to the "bed and breakfast" share sales and repurchase deals used to crystallise capital gains, and so have become known as "bed and PEP" deals. But you need to think it through: will the costs outweigh the tax saving? Indeed, will the initial sale take you over the limits for capital gains tax?

An alternative way to "tidy up" small share stakes or unit trust holdings is to use a share exchange scheme in which a PEP manager sells your shares and invests the proceeds in a managed fund.

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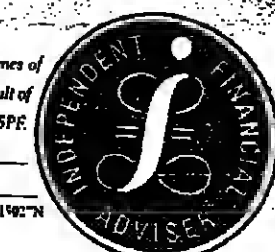
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HAVE YOU SEEN
DAMIAN?

Whatever happened to...
John De Lorean

Whatever happened to...

Year	Rank	Artist
1996	1	Paul McCartney
1995	2	George Michael
1994	3	Michael Jackson
1993	4	Eric Clapton
1992	5	George Michael
1991	6	George Michael
1990	7	George Michael
1989	8	George Michael
1988	9	George Michael
1987	10	George Michael

سكرا من الاصل



The big picture

My Life
Sun 10.30pm BBC2

Bruce Joel Rubin, who scripted *Ghost*, again chose death as his subject when he made his directorial debut. It's about a man who finds he has terminal cancer as his wife is about to give birth to their first child - and therefore decides to shoot a video addressing the spook. Yes, it's sentimental, and yes, it's mystical at the end. However it stars two of the best leading actors in Hollywood, Michael Keaton and Nicole Kidman. Good acting to the rescue, then. To a point.

Television preview

Recommended viewing this weekend
by Gerard Gilbert

It looks like a tick - the sort of tick children get in their homework when they have answered a question correctly. In the trade it is called a "swoosh". To you and me, however, this affirmative symbol on the hats, shirt-sleeves, shorts, socks, shoes and, for all I know, the jock-straps of sports stars and fashion victims means only one thing - Nike.

The rise and rise of this American sportswear operation is the first subject in a new series called *Branded* (Sat BBC2), with future episodes encompassing the Levi label and Heinz 57 Varieties. The story begins with Reebok dominating the market catering to the 1980s aerobics boom. Suitably chastened, Nike's Phil Knight (personal worth: \$5 billion and rising) decided to embrace real sport and teamed aggressive advertising ("Just Do It", etc) with a canny choice in stars to carry his logo, from John McEnroe to Eric Cantona. Their advertising slogan for the Atlanta Olympics was "just taking part is for wimps". Nike herself, of course, was the Greek goddess of victory. We're not told whether she sports a swoosh.

Unfortunately, this tough attitude doesn't just stop

in their ad campaigns, but extends to the manufacturing side of the business. Nike is notorious for hiring cheap Asian labour, at the moment in a country with an unattractive regime, Indonesia. Workers are paid less than \$3 a day, which is the going rate in Indonesia, to make pairs of trainers that will retail for anything up to £110 in this country. But that's cool, because Michael Jordan wears them.

Gobble (Sat BBC1) is the last of the Christmas leftovers, a postscript satire about an outbreak of food-poisoning which was deemed distasteful in the immediate aftermath of the E. coli deaths. Kevin Whately plays a civil servant dispatched to investigate an outbreak of "mad turkey disease" - albeit not too quickly - and soon finding himself immersed in a BSE-type food scare. There's something depressing about the cosy cynicism at work here, especially disappointing given Ian Hislop's co-authorship. You'd expect some sharper revelations from the editor of *Private Eye*. Maybe the BBC lawyers are simply more nervous.

Wildlife programming is still the most dependable of TV genres: perhaps a bit too dependable. When

you get down to it, there's something remorseless about the food chain - the lio-eats-wildebeest continuum that every landscape conceals. The landscape in this week's *The Natural World* (Sun BBC2) is the Grand Canyon, which, having overvisited Arizona, I had hitherto dismissed as a rather kitschy tourist destination. As for the food chain, the battle between the tarantula hawk moth and the tarantula has to go down as the most riveting encounter of the week.

John Humphrys versus John Gummer in *On the Record* (Sun BBC1) clearly has nothing on it. *Windows on the World* (Sat BBC2) is a new series of international documentaries exploring aspects of music. Karl-Heinz Kater's film, "Songs of Seduction", looks at the way music and songs can be used in political indoctrination, comparing Hitler Youth marching songs with skinheads slam-dancing at a neo-Nazi punk concert. The creepiest meal picture is co-opted up by Frank Rennicke, a right-wing folk singer - or should that be folk singer - who includes a lyric sheet for people to sing along with at home. Time to get the black shirt out of the attic, obviously.



The big match

FA Cup: Leicester v Chelsea
Sun 4pm BBC1

Well, now everybody knows just how good Gianfranco Zola (above) is - and that Ruud Geul is building a serious team down there on the Fulham Road, not just an old boys club of continental playboys. The possible departure of Vialli to Southampton just confirms this impression. Not that Leicester City are anyone's mugs, and Chelsea are not the world's best travellers. Zola and De Matteo will also be fired from his exhortations on the sapping Wembley turf. A tight one.

Saturday television and radio

BBC 1

7.00 *Harry and the Hendersons* (3811844).
7.25 *News: Weather* (4658580).
7.30 *Children's BBC: Felix the Cat* (2712115). 7.45 *Phantom 2040* (1693979). 8.10 *The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest* (7041080). 8.35 *The Flintstones* (9158573).
9.00 *Live and Kicking*. Explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, and posters from Allstar's Attic are drafted in to divert the young 'uns (58495134).
12.12 *Weather* (6394293).
12.15 *Grandstand* (S) (6393554). 12.20 *Football Focus* (6746115). 1.00 *News* (T) (14259825). 1.05 *Racing from Cheltenham: the 1.15 race* (15907660). 1.25 *Skiing: Highlights of the women's downhill from Sestriere in Italy* (92234641). 1.40 *Racing from Cheltenham: the 2.15 race* (71566432). 2.25 *Rugby Union: Ireland v England, live coverage from Lansdowne Road. Kick-off is at 3pm* (64944573). 4.40 *Final Score* (2510757). 5.00 *Rugby Union: Highlights of France v Wales* (4136).
5.30 *News, Weather* (T) (900028).
5.40 *Regional News and Weather* (122639).
5.45 *The Simpsons*. Homer's boss is told to clean up his nuclear plant when a three-eyed fish is discovered in a local river (S/T) (488221).
6.10 *The New Adventures of Superman* (S) (474825).
6.50 *Ned's House Party*. GMTV presenter Ross Kelly earns a Gotcha (does one suppose that in C-list celeb land, not to have won a Gotcha is some terrible shame?). Other guests include Edward Woodward and Emyl Hughes (S) (906009).
7.50 *The National Lottery Live*. Katrina and the Waves (remember them?), the first of the four finalists hoping to be our entry in this year's Eurovision Song Contest, get their try-out. Plus, Right Said Fred (remember them?) start the draw (S/T) (703318).
8.10 *Casualty*. Kate threatened by a drunk (313221).
9.00 *Gobble*. See Preview, above (T) (6187979).
10.15 *News and Sport, Weather* (T) (275486).
10.35 *Match of the Day - the Road to Wembley FA Cup Fifth Round*. Highlights from two of the day's key FA Cup ties, with Manchester City v Middlesbrough and Wimbledon v QPR looking like the pick of the round (Leicester v Chelsea is on live on BBC1 tomorrow) (S/T) (449486).
11.45 *The Frank Skinner Show* (R/S) (T) (134467).
12.15 *The Top of the Pops* (S/T) (34005).
12.45 *Dancers* (Herbert Ross 1987 US). Terrifically bad dance melodrama with Mikhail Baryshnikov as an international ballet star and womaniser who becomes infatuated with an American teenager he has spotted in a bar and sends her in his production of *Grease*. The dancer, they kiss; he learns not to cut it about as much (110332).
2.20 *Weather* (5393264). To 2.25am.

BBC 2

6.20 *Open University: The York Mystery Plays* (5604221). 6.45 *Motion: Newton's Laws* (5673825). 7.10 *Panel Painting* (3800738). 7.35 *Traps - and How to Get Out of Them* (1662009). 8.00 *Open Saturday* (4022347).
10.30 *Michael Berry's Choice Cuts* (R) (6923347).
10.40 *Arctic Fox*. Profile of one of the few predatory animals to inhabit the tundra (R) (2315221).
11.05 *Orcs, King of the Sea*. Wildlife film about killer whales (R) (3385931).
11.30 *An Old Spanish Oration*. Musical short from 1934, set in California of the 1840s (2294202).
11.50 *Dames* (Fay Enright 1934 US). Westbury puritan Ezra Quince and his lame-brained cousin Horace try to put the brakes on a new Broadway production staged by their distant relative Jimmy Higgins in this comedy-heavy Busby Berkeley-choreographed musical starring Joan Blondell, Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler (4673689).
1.20 *Film 97 with Barry Norman* (S/T) (2450939).
1.50 *Western Union* (Fritz Lang 1941 US). Lang's surprisingly lusty American frontier epic with Randolph Scott, Dean Jagger and others finding themselves strung along by lines between Omaha and Salt Lake City in the 1890s. Virginia Gilmore is on brown-rope duty (18787370).
3.25 *The Last Wagon* (Delmer Daves 1956 US). Tough and suspenseful western in which a condemned killer Richard Widmark, on his way to be hanged, turns hero in his defence of a wagon train from whooping Apaches (42673283).
5.00 *TOTP 2* (S) (9300080).
5.45 *The Redness is All - the Filming of Hamlet*. Kenneth Branagh at work (S/T) (585370).
6.25 *Ski Sunday Special*. Highlights of the women's downhill from Sestriere in Italy (S) (479009).
6.55 *News and Sport, Weather* (T) (800115).
7.10 *Correspondent*. A new series opens with a report on an expedition to the Amazon to look for some of the world's last uncontacted tribes. Plus, an investigation into the plight of Red Army defectors and their treatment on their return to Russia (S) (339573).
7.55 *What the Papers Say*. David Rose of the Observer reviews the press (S) (725825).
8.05 *Branded*. See Preview, above (675573).
8.45 *Close Up* (R/S) (877592).
9.00 *TBI Death Us Do Part* (R) (6399).
9.30 *Nostromo*. 3/4. The ongoing Joseph Conrad adaptation finds Nostromo and Decoud all at sea with their boat-load of silver (S/T) (57370).
11.00 *Video Foot for Love*. Film autobiography by Australian film editor Robert Gibson, who has spent the last 10 years recording his life with a hand-held camera, portraying his tumultuous love-life in intimate detail through interviews with his former girlfriends (S/T) (755650).
12.25 *Weather* on the World. See Preview, above (7493887).
1.30 *Global VideoBytes* (Followed by *Weatherview*) (7933326). To 1.55am.

ITV/London

6.00 *GMTV*. 6.00 *News*. 6.10 *More In the Hole*. 6.30 *Professor Bubble*. 6.50 *Big Alert* 7.15 *Dragonfly*. 7.45 *Disney's Wake Up in the Wild Room*. 8.55 *Gargoyles* (1371467).
9.25 *Scratchy and Co.* Guests are actor Tim Whitnall and the Smurfbettes (S) (85876757).
11.30 *The Chart Show* (S) (15931).
12.30 *Fresh*. Profile of a design collective set up in the early 1990s (T) (4277221).
1.00 *News, Weather* (T) (14277221).
1.05 *London Weekend Today* (T) (14276592).
1.10 *Carry On Henry* (Gerald Thomas 1970 UK). The boys and girls show what they think of the Richard Burton costume epic *Anne of a Thousand Days* in the spoof of that film, starring James as Henry VIII and Joan Sims as his garlic-breathed wife Marie de Normandy (5527318).
2.55 *Airwolf* (R) (1171283).
3.50 *SeeQuest DSV* (S/T) (2337365).
4.45 *News, Sports Results, Weather* (T) (2904196).
5.05 *London Weekend Tonight* (T) (5295699).
5.20 *Chester*. Over attempt to write a poem to impress a cute substitute teacher (S/T) (1449486).
5.50 *Salina*, the Teenage Witch (S/T) (470202).
6.15 *You Bet Spurs* footballer Teddy Sheringham kills a bit of time (he's injured) by joining *EastEnders* star Wendy Richard and host Darren Day for another round of urbane stunts and darts (S) (265825).
7.15 *Blind Date* (S/T) (231023).
8.15 *Farmy Friends* (S/T) (144844).
8.45 *TIN News, Weather, Lottery Results* (T) (871318).
9.00 *Stakeout*. Another Stakeout (John Badham 1993 US). The sequel to the enjoyable 1987 buddy-buddy cop-movie cum romantic-farce, *Stakeout*, finds Seattle detective Richard Dreyfuss teaming up again with Emilio Estevez. This time they are joined by female cop Nicole Korman. They pretend to be a normal family and move in next door to a fugitive federal witness (S) (3318).
11.00 *Dead Poets Society* (Peter Weir 1989 US). Robin Williams gives one of his best performances to date as the unconventional new English teacher at an elite New England boys academy. His methods unleash creative impulses in the pupils - but these seeds of rebellion (not for nothing is the year 1959) have unintended, far-reaching effects. Ethan Hawke is the only one of the young actors on show to have gone on to a major adult Hollywood career (54818950).
1.20 *Whooops Apocalypse* (Tom Bussmann 1987 UK). The cult 1982 post-apocalyptic TV comedy series, brought sluggishly and rather too conventionally to the screen. New US president Loretta Swift is horrified to learn that a left-wing Central American dictator has invaded the British colony of Santa Maya. UK Prime Minister Peter Cook sends a task force and the world stands on the brink of nuclear destruction - if not great comedy. Rick Mayall co-stars (818121).
3.00 *El Niño* (News) (6749587).
3.45 *Club Nation* (R) (2507158).
4.40 *TV Sport*. *Clash of the Titans* (64146958).
5.05 *Cosmos* (S) (3256713).
5.30 *News* (82245). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

6.00 *Sesame Street* (R) (40405).
7.00 *Dumb and Dumber* (S) (56979).
7.30 *Dennis* (R) (2705825).
7.45 *First Edition* (R/S) (2793080).
8.00 *Transworld Sport* (S) (89467).
9.00 *Morning Line*. The day's horse racing (S) (72592).
10.00 *Gazzetta Football Italia*. Serie A magazine with James Richardson giving the Italian view of this week's crucial World Cup qualifier (4370).
11.00 *NBA 24/7*. American basketball action featuring Orlando Magic v the Detroit Pistons (S) (44134).
12.00 *Ravishide* (9785592).
12.55 *Treasure of the Golden Condor* (Delmer Daves 1953 US). One-time Olympic fencer Cornel Wilde was at home with the swashbuckler - even this moderate, early Technicolor effort about a French nobleman ousted from his estates by his wicked uncle and going to sea in search of South American treasure (T) (30549202).
2.40 *Channel 4 Racing*. Coverage from Newcastle (N) and Warwick (W); the 5.00 *Brambling House* Handicap Chase (N). 3.20 *Michael Page Group* Handicap Chase (N). 3.30 *Newcastle Novices' Chase*. 3.55 *Questor International* Novices' Trial Hurdle (W). 4.10 *Tote Eider* Handicap Chase (N). 4.30 *Michael Page Finance* Handicap Chase (W) and 4.45 *Gosforth Handicap* Chase (N) (S) (79647080).
5.05 *Brookside Omnibus* (R/S) (T) (8692554).
6.30 *Right to Reply* (S/T) (738).
7.00 *A Week in Politics* (S) (82825).
8.00 *Franchise Kings*. Focus on a trio of American children living an extraordinary life deep in the lush Forest of Zaire, where their parents are dedicating their lives to studying forest animals and plants with the help of the Bambuti pygmies (S) (1573).
9.00 *Last Tango in Paris*. Patrick Kinsley celebrates more of his losses (S) (8009).
10.00 *Emotrack*. Amsterdam's flushing dog toilets, reformed Italian porn star, La Cicciolina, and two alternative debt collectors (R/S) (72844).
10.30 *The Show*. Comedian Bob Mills does the before, during and after on another batch of celebrity guests (4493573).
11.35 *Bill Street Blues*. The President's planned visit to Funtoli's precinct calls for the negotiation of a gang treaty (R/T) (142757).
12.35 *TV Pizza*. Transsexual nuns and colonic irrigation amuse Laura Kightlinger in her latest dip into American television culture (8807968).
1.20 *The Little Shop* (S) (5110158).
1.50 *Ricki Lake* (R/S) (T) (5558264).
2.35 *Beavis and Butt-Head* (R/S) (9853719).
3.00 *Flava*. From last night (S) (50719).
3.30 *Bites This House* (R/S) (60133806).
3.55 *Film Night* (R/S) (60045697).
4.25 *Latest Rap*. Documentary about an American maximum security prison (R) (7574335).
4.50 *The White Room*. With Iggy Pop, Nick Cave and PJ Harvey (R/S) (2608535). To 5.00am.

ITV/Regions

ANGIA
As London except 12.30-1.00pm Movies, Games and Videos (17405). 1.10 *Champions of the Future* (24599912). 1.40 *World of Wonder* (2089873). 2.10 *Baywatch* (9120134). 3.00-4.45 *Film: Carry On Up the Jungle* (8855825). 11.00 *Central News* (6482902). 1.25 *Carri Knowledge* (5245061). 2.25 *Film: Rocky* (712121). 4.05 *Movie Club* (75732245). 4.30 *ReCollections* (59398351). 4.40-5.30am *Heater Steller* (7733448).

CELESTIAL
As London except 12.30-1.00pm *Premiere* (117405). 1.10 *Champions of the Future* (24599912). 2.40 *Movie*. Games and Videos (7925134). 3.15-3.30 *Film: Students Exchange* (623318). 5.05 *Central News* (6482902). 5.10-5.20 *Central Match*. *Goal: Extra* (7168660). 3.45-5.30am *Heater Steller* (800662).

ITV WALES
As London except 12.30-1.00pm Movies, Games and Videos (17405). 1.10 *World of Wonder* (24599912). 1.35 *Students* (1841221). 2.15 *Film: Denny*. *Napoleon and Samantha* (741641). 3.55-4.45 *Baywatch* (2935950). 11.00 *Film: Dead Poets Society* (6482902). 1.25 *Carri Knowledge* (5245061). 2.25 *Film: Rocky* (712121). 4.05 *Collins and Maclean's Movie Club* (75732245). 4.30 *ReCollections* (59398351). 4.40-5.30am *Heater Steller* (7733448).

ITV WEST
As ITV Wales except 1.00pm *Sportsworld* (1261028). 1.45 *Film: Napoleon and Samantha* (741641). 3.25 *Baywatch* (2935950). 4.30-4.45 *Film: Carry On Up the Jungle* (8855825). 5.25 *Central News* (6482902). 5.10-5.20 *Central Match*. *Goal: Extra* (7168660). 3.45-5.30am *Heater Steller* (800662).

ITV NORTH
As London except 12.30-1.00pm Movies, Games and Videos (17405). 1.10 *World of Wonder* (24599912). 2.00 *Cartoon* (6316621). 2.10 *Baywatch* (2935950). 3.00-4.45 *Film: Carry On Up the Jungle* (8855825). 11.00 *Film: Dead Poets Society* (6482902). 1.25 *Carri Knowledge* (5245061). 2.25 *Film: Rocky* (712121). 4.05 *Collins and Maclean's Movie Club* (75732245). 4.30 *ReCollections* (59398351). 4.40-5.30am *Heater Steller* (7733448).

ITV CENTRAL
As London except 12.30-1.00pm Movies, Games and Videos (17405). 1.10 *Film: A French Mistress* (9673950). 2.50-3.50 *Airwolf* (6243829). 11.00 *Film: Dead Poets Society* (6482902). 1.25 *Carri Knowledge* (5245061). 2.25 *Film: Rocky* (712121). 4.05 *Collins and Maclean's Movie Club* (75732245). 4.30 *ReCollections* (59398351). 4.40-5.30am *Heater Steller* (7733448).

ITV SOUTH
As London except 12.30-1.00pm Movies, Games and Videos (17405). 1.10 *Airwolf* (6170863). 2.05 *Film: The Sandwich Man* (477554). 3.50-4.45 *Baywatch* (2935950). 5.10-5.20 *Scoreline* (7168660). 1.20 *In Bed with Medicine* (112516). 1.50 *Film: The Hardys* (4890055). 3.20 *Funny Business* (62358332). 3.50 *Collins and Maclean's Movie Club* (75732245). 4.30 *ReCollections* (59398351). 4.40-5.30am *Heater Steller* (7733448).

ITV SOUTH EAST
As London except 12.30-1.00pm Movies, Games and Videos (17405). 1.10 *Airwolf* (6170863). 2.05 *Film: The Sandwich Man* (477554). 3.50-4.45 *Baywatch* (2935950). 5.10-5.20 *Scoreline* (7168660). 1.20 *In Bed with Medicine* (112516). 1.50 *Film: The Hardys* (4890055). 3.20 *Funny Business* (62358332). 3.50 *Collins and Maclean's Movie Club* (75732245). 4.30 *ReCollections* (59398351). 4.40-5.30am *Heater Steller* (7733448).

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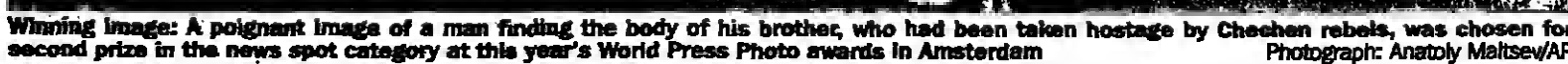
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Richard Lloyd Parry
Bangalore

These are important matters which could do grave damage to Hong Kong," said Mr. Lind. "I have expressed our view that these measures are foolish and very unwise."

British official suggested earlier in the week that the Chinese might be persuaded to step back, and that there was "still something to play for."

"After 30 June, we will not be the sovereign power," said a senior source. "We can't send a gunboat or a task force and our means of leverage are limited, but one of them is international pressure."



Richard Lloyd Parry
Singapore

Despite food and fuel shortages, the atmosphere in Pyongyang was calm, diplomats and United Nations officials said. Celebrations for the 55th birthday of the "Dear Leader", Kim Jong Il, will go ahead as planned this weekend but the cancellation of several official trips suggests a battening down of hatches after the defection of Hwang Jang Yop, a senior adviser to Mr Kim.

The Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, met his South Korean counterpart, Yoo Chong Ha, in Singapore yesterday to discuss the defection of Mr Hwang, who turned up at Seoul's em-

The drama and the apparent North Korean travel ban have imperilled an initiative to hold peace talks with China, the United States and the Koreans. A preparatory briefing was scheduled for

Mr Kim's birthday is the greatest of Korea's national holidays. "I have been here during two or three of these crises before," said a UN official in Pyongyang, "and the city is always calm. But we have food shortages, power cuts and only a few hours' water a day. The outlook is not good."

Jan McGirk
New Delhi

Mr Bleach has been in Presidency jail for 14 months, with six others arrested in connection with the case, including the Lat-

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obituaries / gazette

Nora Beloff

Nora Beloff was a pioneer woman journalist of formidable intelligence, courage and tenacity. She was one of the first British women to become resident foreign correspondents and political writers for national newspapers.

She worked in Paris after the Second World War for Reuters, the *Economist* and the *Observer*, and went on to become the political correspondent, and later an international roving reporter, for the *Observer*, covering the world, Washington as well as Moscow and Belgrade.

She belonged to a generation in which women needed to be brighter and more fearless than male rivals for plum jobs. Her obvious qualifications did not always make her friends amongst her male colleagues, whose arguments she tended to dismiss as "nonsense". And some of her many distinguished political and diplomatic contacts flinched when she came on the telephone to bend their ears. She was incapable of allowing a sloppy thought to slip past without a challenge.

Nora Beloff was the third of the five children her émigré Russian-Jewish parents produced and brought up in Britain. Her father traded in chemicals in what is now part of Belarus; her mother was a graduate of the University of St Petersburg. The couple left Russia for England in 1909 to further the husband's business interests and changed their name from Rahinovich to Beloff. They did not attempt to disguise their origin, but they did want a short name the English could recognise and remember. They never became fully at home in the English language, but their business enterprises prospered and they founded a brilliant dynasty. Their eldest child, Max, created an independent university and was ennobled. Another became Professor of Psychology at Edinburgh, a daughter became a headmistress, and another married a future Nobel prizewinner for chemistry. The following generation produced, among others, Michael Beloff QC.

Nora was born in 1919, and

went to King Alfred's School, a progressive co-educational establishment, before reading History at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, where she graduated in 1940. During the war she worked for Political Intelligence at the Foreign Office and joined the British Embassy in Paris after the liberation of France. She left the diplomatic service in 1945 to join Reuters.

She had always asked questions as a child and been chastised for it. As a journalist, she found she was actually being paid to ask questions. Her time with Reuters was not happy; her bureau chief was an enthusiastic Gaullist, which Beloff was not, but she learned the essentials of her trade: how to get news and how to write it in a lively, readable way.

Her typing, however, remained rudimentary. She hammered her machines as if intending to destroy them, but produced coded messages only she could decipher. While a foreign correspondent she wrote the last drafts of her stories on the phone, dictating to skilled,

knowledgeable copywriters. She continued to do this while covering politics in London.

She made her name during the Algerian war (1954-62), when she wrote well-informed, hard-hitting features about the torture of the women rebels Djamilia Boupacha and Djamilia Bouhired by French paratroopers. She left France, before de Gaulle returned to power in 1958, travelled the world, and then took on Westminster and British national politics, as the *Observer's* political correspondent (1964-76). With the support of her editor, David Astor, she exposed the extreme left of the Labour Party in the left-of-centre *Observer*, which also backed Edward Heath with his battle with the trade unions. Beloff was at heart a Conservative. She was not religious.

She did not get on well with Astor's successor, Donald Treford, and after a final quarrel with him in 1978 left the paper she had served for 30 years. She did not, however, stop asking questions and continued to bombard her many contacts

with letters and telephone calls. Her final years were concentrated on the tragedy of Yugoslavia and what she called "the avoidable war". Typically, she chose an unpopular line of argument and sought to prove that the Serbs were not the villains they had been made out to be. She argued that the international media, especially television, were incapable of getting at the truth. She defended her version of the truth with her customary energy and courage. She abandoned the book she had set out to write on Yugoslavia and concentrated on trying to influence the world's policy-makers.

Nora Beloff devoted most of her life to journalism but, in 1977, when she was 58, she married Clifford Makins, the legendary sports editor of the *Observer*, who died in 1990. She had no children of her own, but is remembered by her nieces and nephews as "a marvellous aunt" who kept the various branches of the family in touch with each other. Her books reflect her interests, as



'Nonsense!' Beloff outside court during her successful libel action against Private Eye, 1972. Photograph: Hulton Getty

signments and the awkward questions which never dried up.

William Millinship

Nora Beloff, author and journalist: born 24 January 1919; correspondent in Paris, Washington, Moscow, Brussels, *Observer* 1948-78; books include *The General Says No* 1963, *The Transit of Britain* 1973, *Freedom Under Foot* 1976, *No Travel Like Russian Travel* 1979, *Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia and the West 1939-84* (married 1977) Clifford Makins (died 1990); died 12 February 1997.

Kitty Stein

For more than three quarters of the 20th century, at a time when women were expected to stay at home and raise families, Kitty Stein was one of the key leaders of Jewish communal life.

In 1923, she was chosen by Henrietta Szold, the charismatic leader of Hadassah, the American women's organisation for the Zionist cause, to become involved in that work and in the building of a Jewish community in Palestine. Later, when she became a central figure for Youth Aliyah, concerned with bringing young children out of Hitler's Germany to Palestine and Great Britain, she met all the leaders of European Jewry involved in the dream for a Jewish homeland. By then, she had married Leonard Stein, the historian of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and a close associate of Chaim Weizmann, later the first president of the State of Israel.

For her 90th birthday, her son Richard took her to Israel where she could see the fruits of her labours, particularly the youth villages and inspect places like the "Sarah K. Stein Club" in Alonim Yotzabek, and recall her meetings with the founders of the Weizmann Museum explained that all the rooms were as they had been decades ago. Kitty Stein firmly disagreed and explained how the furniture should be re-arranged.

Recently, an interviewer asked Kitty Stein what she would expect at the end of her life. At once, she quoted Charles Kingsley's "A Farewell":

Be good, sweet maid, and let

Do lovely things, not dream them

And so make Life and Death and

One grand sweet song.

But she was clever. Her modesty concealed a formidable intellect and profound learning. She explained that Kingsley's quotation by saying: "I believe in that vast forever and shall become part of it. As you cannot add to, or diminish from, the mass of the universe, I am part of that too."

Her questing and questioning approach to faith reflected the thoughts of her favourite teacher, Alfred North Whitehead. After studying at Barnard/Columbia University in New York, she rejected a fellowship at Bryn Mawr so that she could study with Whitehead at Harvard. But she also worked with Harry Wolfson, professor of Hebrew literature and thought and the great expert on Philo and on Spinoza, who considered Kitty one of the best students he had ever encountered.

Kitty was rooted in Judaism (at the age of 16 she was tutored by the great Dayan Moses

Hyamson, then a professor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York). Born Sara Kitay, in 1899, she grew up among the granddaughters of American Jewish life. Her surname was the old Russian word for China (Cathay), and her father came from Lithuania.

He was a liberal traditionalist—the horses of the family carriage rested on the Sabbath; he felt the need to live outside New York, where the Orthodox community kept their shops open on the Sabbath. The 100-year-old furniture store, early purveyors of the hire-purchase plan, were closed on the Sabbath. In time, Kitty joined the Reform movement, but she always respected traditional Jewish life and thought. If not a feminist, Kitty was a fighter for women's rights, her own public life proved her leadership within Jewry.

Kitty met Leonard Stein at a Zionist Congress in Vienna, 1925. The family recalls that he asked her to dance; and he did not like her hair "piled up like a pin". He pulled out a vital hair, and it all tumbled down. She was furious, and fell in love with him on the spot. When he married three years later, she came back with him to England despite her parents' objection.

Kitty Stein always searched for adventures and encounters. When she first visited Palestine in 1923, travelling from Alexandria to Jerusalem, she found by compartment invaded by Ha-Selassie's entourage; and enjoyed a long conversation with the emperor. During the difficult 1930s, she worked with the Woman's Appeal Committee to bring refugee children of Germany, and became part of the executive of the British Youth Aliyah Committee, which contacts with the Germans, Rebecca Steff, Le Mahan and Leonard Stein, kept her active in other cases of Jewish life and thought.

During the Second World War she lectured to troops around Britain on "Democracy"—a subject she coached students in her convent school.

In an interview in the *Jew Chronicle* she stated: "I do not believe in the existence of God as an external force. Every man establishes his own kind of god. I'm biased, I suppose, but I have brought up as a Jew, but I that our conception of God and ethical concepts are far, far superior to anything that anyone else created and that the Old Testament has contributed more to the civilisation of law and culture in Western Europe than any other fact."

Her husband Leonard died in 1973, when he was 85. Kitty continued to live in the Temple Mount by judges and the law. Her visitors on her last birthday, two months before she died, were amazed at her clarity of thought and sharp decisions. At the West London Synagogue and the Westminster Synagogue she was involved in questions of ritual and of liturgy—and gave advice to the rabbis.

Albert H. Friedman

Sarah Kitay, community leader and educator: born Parsons, Jersey 9 November 1899; married 1928 Leonard Stein (died 1973); one son, and one son deceased; died London 5 January 1997.



Stein: 'that vast forever'

Lawrence A. Fleischman, art collector and philanthropist, died London 31 January, aged 71. A fund-raiser for the arts in America and Europe, in 1991 he funded the refurbishment of the Bassae Gallery at the British Museum and made subsequent donations for the redevelopment of two of the Parthenon galleries.

Ranul da Anda, film-maker, died 2 February, aged 88. Art of Mexican cinema from early 1930s to the late 1950s. "El Chino Negro", the "El Chino Negro", as he was nicknamed, acted in, produced and directed over 250 movies, the last known being *Sanja*, in which he starred with the actress Lita Torralba.

Marjorie Reynolds

"Marjorie Reynolds, a blonde newcomer," enthused *Larry*, "is a comely looker of much talent, poise and versatility, who will certainly calendar her own professional prominence from the springboard of this Crosby-Astaire musical." The curious use of the word "calendar" (to denote "gain") can be explained by the fact that the film under review was Irving Berlin's *Holiday Inn* (1942). The use of the word "newcomer" is also curious; the 21-year-old Miss Reynolds was then the veteran of more than 40 films, having made her screen debut 19 years earlier.

Born Marjorie Goodspeed, she was taken to Los Angeles as a small child and enrolled in dance classes by her ambitious mother. As Marjorie Moore, she was soon appearing on the silent screen with Ramon Navarro in *Scaramouche* (1923), and with Diana Dana in *Revelation* (1924). After a brief retirement, she returned to make her first talkie, John Barrymore's *Svengali* (1931). She played small roles in *College Humour* (1932) and *The Big Broadcast of 1936* (1935), both of which starred her future lead-

ing man Bing Crosby. After *College Holiday* (1936), *Broadway Melody of 1938* and *Champagne Waltz* (both 1937), she appeared with Tex Ritter in *Tex Ritter with the Boy Scouts* (1938). The first of 14 small-budget westerns she would make in the next four years, opposite such sagebrush stars as Buck Jones, Ken Maynard, Bob Baker, George O'Brien, Tim Holt and Roy Rogers. In between she toiled in equally low-rent thrillers.

Less than a week before *Holiday Inn* went into production, Paramount Pictures had yet to find a suitable leading lady. Their problem was solved when the choreographer Danny Dare recommended an actress/dancer with whom he had worked on various musicals. The studio wasted precious time searching for Marjorie Moore before learning that she'd changed her name in 1937, after marrying one Jack Reynolds.

Once they had found and screen-tested her, she was eagerly signed and flung into dance rehearsals with Fred Astaire. True, she wasn't much of a singer, but since when has that ever posed a problem to Hollywood? Marjorie Meurs dubbed

her vocals, and Paramount was so pleased with her performance in *Holiday Inn* that they awarded her a seven-year contract, and cast her opposite Crosby again in *Dixie* (1943), the alleged biography of the composer Dan Emmett, in which, as his loyal wife, she inspired the writing of the title song. She gave an impressive dramatic performance as a Viennese refugee in Fritz Lang's film version of Graham Greene's *Ministry of Fear* (1945), and made a ravishingly beautiful princess in the Bob Hope romp, *Monsieur Beaucaire* (1946). She was loaned to Universal for one of Abbott and Costello's better vehicles, *The Time of Their Lives* (1946), in which she and Costello played ghosts doomed to haunt a stately mansion until they had proved they weren't traitors during the American Revolution. In a clever special effect, the two ghosts had a head-on collision, but simply passed through, ending up wearing one another's clothes. Reynolds, who was pregnant throughout the filming, said later, "I just wanted to get it over with."

When her Paramount contract expired, she appeared in

Mario Lanza's first starring film, *That Midnight Kiss* (1949), and then in a trio of "B" pictures that suggested the action quidies she ground out in the 1930s: *Customs Agent*, *The Great Jewel Robbery* and *Rookie Fireman* (all 1950). For MGM she made a film calculated to endear the studio to the House Un-American Activities Committee. Called *Home Town Story* (1951), and financed by a top executive of General Motors, it was the story of a liberal newspaper editor who learned that Big Business wasn't a heartless monolith, when his little sister was hurried to a cave-in, and the owner of the town's largest firm organised her rescue. Marilyn Monroe made an early screen appearance in this oddity.

Reynolds entered television when William Bendix chose her to play his dutiful wife in the sitcom *The Life of Riley* (1953-58). After *Riley*, there were guest appearances in various television series, but few films, the last of which was *The Silent Witness* (1962).

In 1987, asked by a journalist from *Classic Image* magazine whether she would welcome a big screen comeback, Marjorie



Reynolds: 'I just wanted to get it over with' Photograph: Kobal

Reynolds replied, "Sure, I'd like to click and become a box office tornado, but, if I don't, I've got no kick coming. Personally, I like Hollywood and I like pictures. But that doesn't mean I have any illusions about either."

Dick Vosburgh

Marjorie Goodspeed (Marjorie Reynolds), actress: born Buhi, Idaho 12 August 1921; married 1937 Jack Reynolds (one daughter, marriage dissolved 1952); 1953 Jon M. Hoffman (died 1985); died Manhattan Beach, California 1 February 1997.

Jose Ignacio Domecq

Don Jose Ignacio Domecq was the acknowledged king of sherry tasters and known as El Nariz, "the Nose", for his astonishing ability to sniff out the nuances in the creation of his family's wonderful sherries.

Tall and lean, he earned this name for literal as well as figurative reasons. His hawk-like nose was memorably large. It was also his great good fortune — an indispensable gift in the blending necessary for creating the best of all sherries. From his childhood he could memorise aromas and tastes ranging from the freshly pressed must of Palomino grapes to the rich, old dry sherries called Olorosos dating from the 17th century when the company was founded by an Irish farmer Patrick Murphy and one Juan Haurie.

The company rose to fame and fortune in the early 19th century when Ruskin, Telford, and Domecq were leaders in the British sherry trade. However the senior partner Ruskin's son, John, decided to make a life



Domecq: 'The Nose'

writing on art and architecture — which he did with famous effect. It was left to another partner, Pedro Domecq Lembeque, a relative of the Haurie family which had owned the firm since 1791, to expand the business. In 1816 Pedro Domecq quarrelled with the Haurie family, bought the business and renamed it Domecq after himself.

Jose Domecq joined Domecq in 1939, became a mem-

ber of the board in 1957 and from 1994 until December 1996 was on the main board of Allied Lyons Domecq.

In 1992, the all-party Heritage Group of peers and members of the House of Commons, paying our own way, and organised by our imaginative and energetic chairman, Sir Patrick Cormack MP, travelled to Spain. Highlights included two hours with King Juan Carlos, and meetings with members of the government and the opposition, the Mayor of Seville in Expo year, and with Don Jose Ignacio Domecq.

As we descended from our bus outside the winery — a colossal whitewashed warren of buildings, streets and cellars called "The Jerusalem of Jerez" — a septuagenarian hove into sight on an ancient Moto Guzzi Hispania motorbike, a Jack Russell dog (as always) in a basket on the back. He descended from his bike and greeted each of his guests with a ferocious handshake.

"The Nose" took us round his 2,500 acres of vineyards in Jerez superior from which come the well known sherry brands of Fino La Ina and the Double Century range. Afterwards we were shown his wonderful collection of Andalusian horses; he was an expert polo player well into his seventies.

But the crowning experience was being taken by Domecq into his vaults. They must be among the most spectacular cellars in the world and none of us will ever forget being given a taste of brandy made by the original Pedro Domecq in the year that Napoleon went to St Helena, 1816.

His young colleagues told us that Jose Domecq's personal skills as a blender were stupendous. In an essay for *Christie's Wine Companion* (1987) he wrote:

Strolling through the bodega dipping old sherry which have rested undisturbed for generations, must be one of the most satisfying encounters a man can have with wine.

In the same essay he gave his view of the world thus:

In ancient bodegas one watches human egos come and go — all talking loudly about market trends etc in the jargon of the moment — while the wine ignores them all and silently ages, turning itself with its tacit guidance into the same lovely old perfection enjoyed by our ancestors.

In his book *Sherry* (1970), Julian Jeffs wrote:

At Domecq's bodega there is a cask of Palomino that is well over 200 years old; it has, of course, been refreshed from time to time with old wine of the same style, but it is now practically black and is so strong in flavour that it cannot be drunk unless blended with a younger wine.

Domecq was clearly coddled by seeing the British parliamentarians and their wives grinning at the smallest taste of this ancient brew.

An Anglophile Spanish aristocrat, Domecq was a frequent visitor to London. When not in his winery's laboratory or tending his properties all over Jerez, his second home was the Bay of

Geddes where he pursued his passion for sailing. His ashes were sprinkled over the waters of his beloved bay.

Jose Domecq had style. Five days before he died of lung cancer he had the energy to remove his oxygen mask and drink what he called "La Penultima Capita". He fought ferociously to protect the good name of "sherry" against non-Spanish imitations, and won the war of nomenclature in Brussels in 1994 in establishing his point by European Directive (British sherry henceforth had to be described as "British fortified wine"). His only sadness was that in the same year his firm had to come under the control of the vast multi-national Allied Lyons Drinks Co.

Tam Dalyell

Jose Ignacio Domecq, winemaker and taster: born Jerez, Spain 31 July 1914; married 1934 Angeles Fernandez de Bobadilla y Gonzalez (seven sons, five daughters); died Jerez 15 January 1997.

No authority can be exercised without dialogue

faith & reason

On Ash Wednesday a group of radical Catholics challenged Cardinal Basil Hume to return the Catholic Church to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. Elizabeth Stuart endorses the call.

Now a world-wide "We Are Church" movement has formed which seeks to recall the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the vision of the Council and initiate dialogue on issues such as the nature of priesthood and sexuality. This includes in Britain a coalition of Catholic groups, the Jubilee People, who are circulating a "Declaration" of desired reforms.

In response Cardinal Hume quite rightly warned against a constant appeal to personal conscience in matters of morality. For a Catholic (or indeed a Christian) moral decisions are always best made in the context of, and informed by, the community of faith. Indeed, many Catholics may have left the Church precisely because they were encouraged by their pastors to exercise

their personal conscience in matters of birth control whilst the hierarchy continued to teach its sinfulness. But if overdependence upon private judgement is incompatible with the Catholic ethos so too is the Cardinal's statement that "there comes a point where obedience is demanded and docility to the mind of the Magisterium is the proper attitude to adopt." This week the "We Are Church" movement wrote an open letter to Cardinal Hume in response.

The Vatican Council grounded its theology of authority in the concept of servanthood. The full implications of this were not drawn out by the Council but were taken up by feminist and liberation theologians: leaders do not own power but hold it on behalf of a community to whom they are accountable for its use. The language of servanthood and force is mutually incompatible. In the life of Trinity we have a model of a community, sharing and exchanging power, of dynamic dialogue within God's self which should be reflected in His people.

The root meaning of the word authority is "to cause to grow or enlarge, to increase". Dialogue is a necessary prerequisite to the exercise of authority. For how is the Church to know what diminishes and what enlarges the dignity of gay people and women unless it engages in dialogue with those with-

in and without its walls? How can it Church conclude women priests to a theological impossibility without first carefully listening to the experience of those sister churches which have admitted women to the priesthood particularly as the Second Vatican Council acknowledged that the spirit of revelation and the quality of catholicity were not confined to the Roman Church?

Authentic dialogue changes all parties and the reform groups should be prepared to end up in a place very different from where they started — a should the hierarchy. Dialogue through letters has a venerable history in the Christian Church: it is how St Paul worked and refined the theology which was to become the foundation of so much Christian belief and practice. His theology is the product of dialogue with his communities.

How appropriate it therefore is that the latest exchange in the dialogue between the Cardinal and the Jubilee People should take place on Ash Wednesday, when the whole Church dons ashes as a visible sign by the body of Christ that it has failed to be what it is called to be, the pilgrim people of God, living out in its own being the radical mutuality, equality, and power sharing of the Holy Trinity.

Faith & Reason is edited by Paul Valley

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

ASHLEY: Judith Ann Elizabeth, dearly loved mother of Helen and Tom, at home on Sunday 9 February. The funeral will take place at St Peter's Church, Oadby on Wednesday 19 February at 2.30pm. The interment will follow at St Andrew's Church, Wellingborough, on Thursday 20 February at 11am. Simple flowers and/or donations to the Leicestershire Macmillan Society may be sent to A.J. Atkinson & Son FD, 12 London Rd., Oadby, Leicestershire, LE3 5DG.

MEMORIAL SERVICES

PUFFETT: A memorial service for Dr Derrick Robert Puffett, Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge 1984-96 and formerly University Lecturer in Norse, will be held in St John's College Chapel on Saturday 1 March 1997 at 12 noon.

IN MEMORIAM

BONNICE: Susan Bonnice died 10 February 1996. Remembered with love. For Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS please telephone 0171-293 2012 or fax to 0171-293 2010.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment moves to the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, London. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment moves to the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, London. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment moves to the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, London.

Birthdays

TODAY: Births: Clive Adet, Editor, *Country Life*; 42; Sir Nicholas Bayne, former High Commissioner to Canada; 60; Sir Harold Beoley, former ambassador; 88; Sir William Bentley, chairman, Society of Pension Consultants; 70; Miss Claire Bloom, actress; 60; Sir Stephen Brown, former chairman, Stone-Plant Industries; 91; Mr Derek Conway MP; 44; Mr Dan Crompton, former Chief Constable, Nottinghamshire; 56; Sir Maurice Drake, former High Court Judge; 74; Mr Frank Dunlop, former Director of the Edinburgh Festival; 70; Mr Paul Ferris, author and journalist; 68; Mr John Greenwood MP; 51; Mr Gerald Harper, actor; 68; Miss Diana Jones, jockey; 47; Professor Andrew Miller, Principal, Stirling University; 61; Mr Charles Needham, former chairman, Coalite; 73; Sir Richard O'Brien, former chairman, Manpower Services Commission; 77; Sir William Reid, the Ombudsman; 80; Miss Jane Seymour, actress; 46; Miss Clare Short MP; 51; Mr Peter Squire, former Headmaster, Bedford Modern School; 60; Mr John Stainer, musician; 82; Sir Adrian Swire, chairman, John Swire & Sons Ltd; 65; Sir Alan Ward, a Lord Justice of Appeal; 59; The Right Rev Robert Woods, Assistant Bishop, Gloucester; 83.

TOMORROW: Miss Patti Andrews, singer (of the Andrews Sisters); 77; Mr Patrick Bailey, former director, Garwick and Stansted Airports; 72; Mr Paul Bailey, novelist; 60; Mr Jeremy Bulloch, actor; 52; Professor Robin Clark, Sir William Ramsay Professor of Chemistry, University College London; 62; Mrs Stella

Clarke, chairman of council, Bristol University; 65; Mr Frederick Cunningham, painter; 67; Sir Anthony Dowell, senior principal and director of the Royal Ballet; 54; Mr David Griffiths, portrait painter; 58; Mr Peter Hain MP; 47; Mr Peter Hobday, radio presenter; 60; Mr Mike Holding, cricketer; 43; Mr Elihu Inbal, conductor; 60; Mr Ian Tavender, actor; 51; Professor Jack Levy, engineer; 71; Mrs Anne Lonsdale, President, New Hall, Cambridge; 56; Mr John McEnroe, tennis player; 38; Mr Gerard Mansell, former Deputy Director-General of the BBC; 76; Mr John Moore, Headmaster, St Dunstan's College, Bedford; 54; Mr Francois-Navier Ottoli, former Vice-President, economic and financial affairs; 72; Mr Peter Porter, poet; 68; Mr John Schlesinger, film director; 71; Sir James Swaffield, former Director-General and Clerk to the GLC; 73; Sir Peter Webster, former High Court judge; 75.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Galileo Galilei, astronomer and mathematician; 1564. Deaths: Cardinal Nicholas Nat "King" Cole (Nathaniel Adams Coles), singer and musician; 1965. Today is the Feast Day of St Agape of Terni, St Sigrind of Vagso, St Tanco or Tanco of St Walfrid or Galfrid. TOMORROW: Births: Glimbartism Bodoni, printer and typographer; 1740. Deaths: Sir Isaac Leslie Horne, 1st Baron Horne-Belisha, statesman; 1977. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of Saints Elias, Jeremy and their Companions, St Gilbert of Sempringham, St Juliana of Cumae and St Oesimus the Slave.

A small neighbour that we have failed

On a mild Saturday morning in a relatively comfortable, relatively secure Britain, Albania is doubtless far from the minds of most of our readers. It is far from the minds of most people. That is one reason why it has degenerated so rapidly into such a nasty mess.

Albania has, admittedly, been a nasty mess for most of the last 50 years. When its people rose up to throw the Communists out of power, they hoped it could be otherwise. But President Sali Berisha and his Democratic Party, once the bright hopes of south-eastern Europe, have succumbed to the temptations of power.

For a long time, only two things about Albanians were well-known in Britain: one, that their election results were implausibly one-sided; two, that Norman Wisdom was a national hero.

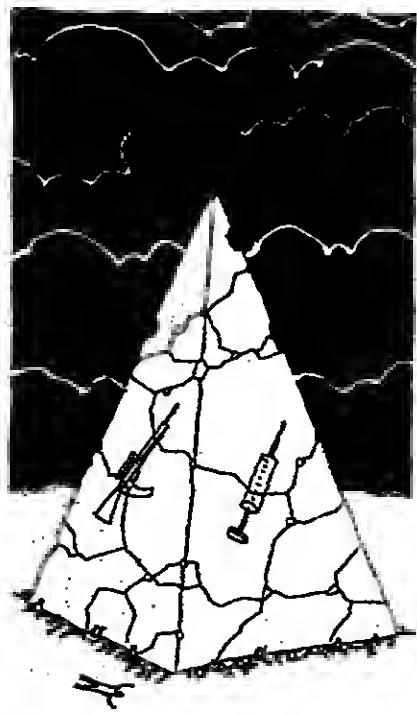
Now we need to pay more serious attention. A third fact has come to the nation's attention: the place is run by gangsters. Yesterday and today, we report a fourth important fact: our Government and our government party have supported these gangsters, long after it should have become obvious to them that they were up to their elbows in corruption.

Along with all the peoples of Eastern Europe, Albanians were made this promise by the West: "Come into the family of democ-

cratic nations, and we will help you to obtain the fruits of liberty and capitalism." That promise has been betrayed. In their naivety, Albanians elected a pyramid-seller as president. His slogan was: "Put your investment in the Democratic Party. It can only go higher." It should have been obvious in the west that the interest offered on government-backed accounts was unsustainable and would ultimately damage faith in the free market and democracy.

Now Albania has become a gangster state where democracy is once again a sick joke, the opposition can expect to be beaten up and imprisoned, with an economy based on smuggling, exploitation, drugs and extortion.

There are many reasons why this has been allowed to happen. We are ignorant of countries like Albania, and in the post-Cold War gloaming most of us (and many politicians and public servants) don't really want to bother about what seems a peripheral country. For those who did take an interest, helping the countries of Eastern Europe to move smoothly to democracy was a laudable aim. But politicians have to make a judgement about whom they are helping. And it seems that some of the more zealous on the political right saw Albania in out-of-date terms. Once the Communists were pitched out of power, the right was the only bulwark of democracy and capitalism, in their view. An



authoritarian conservative like Sali Berisha seemed preferable to a return to the days of Communism. Now we know that the intelligence agencies have been reporting back to national capitals for some time that the situation in Albania was deplorable. People have not listened.

Others might have worse reasons for turning a blind eye: it seems likely that some people in Europe have found it profitable to let corruption run rife in a small, obscure corner of south-eastern Europe while money is made.

The United States, to give it credit, seems to have realised that things were going wrong. Europe, and especially France and Italy, have been blind; Britain and Germany are dithering. This country is on our doorstep, and we should care more that it is an unjust place. More concretely, drug-smuggling through Albania, political disintegration and money-laundering give us plenty of reasons to do something about it.

Britain is further away, but we have been culpable all the same. The Government went out of its way to be nice to Mr Berisha when the going was good, and it has not done much to change its line now things have gone wrong.

There is no reason to think that British policy has been motivated by a desire to see gangsters in power. But it is clear that a pref-

erence for a right-winger has created a blind spot. Britain likes stability in the Mediterranean, and has done for a century; and stability often means injustice. Having a friend in Tirana - a man who professed sympathy with the goals and values of Conservatism, and with Britain, must have seemed attractive.

There is a much broader point here than the direction of British foreign policy in the Balkans. Albania is not the only country drifting back into a nightmare. Throughout the world, many of the states that have emerged blinking into the daylight from the rubble of the Soviet Union and its satellites are now sliding back into the darkness again. In most cases, it is the same combination of indolent ignorance and short-sighted self-interest on the part of the West that is responsible.

A world where gangsters rule will not be a pleasant one. But that is what we face if situations like that in Albania are allowed to flourish. The solution pressed upon us by the professionals - rebuild our defences, throw a few million pounds more at the security services - will not address this problem. Organised crime and its links to politics is one of the biggest problems which we face in the world today, and ministers remind us of that almost daily. If by their failure they have encouraged it, then we want to know.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Senior officers call for tighter curbs on arms exports

Sir: The Scott Report into the arms trade, published a year ago today, demonstrated the urgent need for a stricter approach to weapons transfers. The case for restraint is often argued on humanitarian grounds. What is not stated is that our own armed forces are endangered by ill-conceived exports. This is a powerful rationale for stricter export controls.

There are compelling military reasons for tightly regulating arms sales to regions of tension and instability. The "boomerang effect" by resulting in European troops being armed with weapons supplied by their own governments in peace-keeping operations in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia. During the Gulf war, Allied forces faced the heavily armed Iraqi forces, equipped as a result of the export of arms and military equipment from the European Union in the 1980s.

It is important that our forces have the best weapons available, but it is often argued that in order to subsidise the cost of developing new technology we need to export new weapons systems. With constrained defence budgets, the export potential of new projects is now a major consideration for any future development. For example, the UK government is already marketing the Eurofighter in the Middle East before the project has reached completion. By freely exporting the same weapons used by our own forces we are arming potential future opponents and so



British troops in the Gulf war - facing European weapons in Iraqi hands

have to develop more new equipment to retain any technological edge. Unilateral approaches to restraint are often confounded by a fear of loss of trade - "If we don't do it someone else will". Tougher control and restraint measures are therefore required at a national, European, and international level. Support continues to build for the introduction of a code of conduct on

the arms trade at the ongoing EU Inter-Governmental Conference. Accompanied by similar initiatives in the US and the UN, the introduction of such a code would significantly reduce the levels of human rights abuses, conflict, death and destruction caused by irresponsible arms exports to repressive regimes and regions of tension. The code of conduct would

also help safeguard the lives of our own forces. The opportunity to implement an EU code of conduct exists now - but it needs the support of Britain. We would urge the Government to support this initiative. General Sir HUGH BEACH, Field Marshal Lord CARVER, Admiral Sir JAMES EBERLE, London WC1

Drop the futile 'war on drugs'

Sir: The ridiculously out-dated 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act is patently not stopping the great British public from consuming ever greater quantities of criminalising their lives ("Trainspotting the reality", 13 February).

The new Home Office report demonstrates that government policy is giving £600m per year to violent criminal gangs in London alone every year. I propose the Government legalise cannabis, tax it, and use the money to subsidise proper education and harm-reduction campaigns against hard drugs.

Though the public has accepted that drug-taking is as commonplace as, and safer than, many legal activities, the Government continues in its futile War On Drugs, denying any debate - even on the subject of medicinal cannabis. JON THOMPSON, Macclesfield, Cheshire

Sir: Once again we hear of starving refugees. Once again the world's governments and the UN ignore a vital food supply - easy to grow, two to three crops a year, grows almost anywhere, no pesticides or artificial fertilisers. For thousands of years much of the human race survived from cannabis seed, using it to make gruel and bread. Today the plant is banned almost everywhere, seemingly because those in power do not want people to get high. The many medicinal uses of cannabis are similarly ignored.

Surely the "high" of cannabis is not the real reason, considering that dangerous and addictive alcohol is legal. Could it be pressures from the companies which make ineffective synthetic drugs, pesticides and fertilisers, diesel and plastics? Hemp grown for fibre (the word "cannabis" comes from the Dutch word for hemp), paper, fuel, oil, paints, and medicines, is cheaper, better and with no pollution. More reasons to vote for a Legalise Cannabis candidate in the election. JACK GIRLING, Chairman, Campaign to Legalise Cannabis International Association, Norwich

Turn-around

Sir: In the depths of the recession, 1991-1992, each criticism of government policy was met with the mantra, "We wish we could do something about it but the world is in recession: these things are beyond our control." Now that the global economy is on a better footing (oh yes, and an election approaching in the UK) the same bunch are claiming all the credit. SIMON CALLEN, Little Gaddesden, Hertfordshire

Stealing history

Sir: While innumerable foreign artefacts lie in the British Museum it becomes as a nation to call any other collector a thief ("Pictorial" that grove the guilt of Moshe Dayan", 14 February). We should, in just reparation, donate a properly earthquake-resistant museum to Athens to house the Parthenon Marbles. FAMELA DONOHUE, Sheffield

Brain capacity

Sir: With reference to the discussion about the relative brain size of women and men (Technoquest, 10 February, Letters, 13 February), surely there is a correlation here with other parts of the human anatomy? It's not the size that matters, but what you do with it. MARGARET BROOKES-TULLETT, Horsham, West Sussex

LETTER from THE EDITOR

"Trial by newspaper" is the emotive, tossed-about term for much of what modern papers do - it is what red-faced MPs smart when cornered, as in the Neil Hamilton case. We were conducting "trial by newspaper" yesterday morning on the front page, when we attacked Western politicians over the gangster-state of Albania, and we continue the prosecution with relish this morning.

We did call OJ Simpson a murderer on the front page, and some readers objected but that followed a civil case which had in effect convicted him as a killer. In most examples, "trial by newspaper" is really a shorthand for journalistic finger-pointing and we assume that proper legal or political process will follow - that Parliament will act, or that a criminal prosecution will be brought.

But the jaw-dropping behaviour of *The Daily Mail* yesterday is in another league. By naming five unconvicted men as the murderers of Stephen Lawrence and challenging them to sue, it acted as a revolutionary tribunal of public opinion.

My instinctive reaction was an admiring gasp: it was a journalistic coup de theatre which chimed with what many people thought. Getting a murder prosecution in the climate of fear surrounding the case, with the accused refusing to answer, had proved impossible. So the *Mail* went ahead and, following the brave Lawrence family's crusade, convicted them anyway.

The hard truth is that newspapers are not juries, nor are editors judges. We get above ourselves at our peril. The hard truth is that newspapers are not juries, nor are editors judges. We get above ourselves at our peril. The hard truth is that newspapers are not juries, nor are editors judges. We get above ourselves at our peril.

Criminal standards of evidence can be frustrating, occasionally infuriating, but they are an essential civil protection against injustice - and that can create other injustices. It's a bad system, but better than any of the other ones. Being a journalist is great fun and a great privilege, but there is a sense of hubris about the trade which is becoming unsettling. The line between fearlessly accusing and simple bullying blurs very easily.

Now a shameless puff, a piece of free advertising, a blatant abuse of my editorial position. An Ipswich-based publisher,

The hard truth is that newspapers are not juries, nor are editors judges. We get above ourselves at our peril.

the Golgonooza Press, has produced a collection of essays by an elderly Kentucky tobacco farmer by the name of Wendell Berry - it's called *Standing on Earth*. So? Well, Berry is something of a wise and radical writer on man's relations with the planet. He produces poetry, essays, short stories, travel diaries and novels. He writes "about" education, farming, poetry, religion, energy and marriage but they all merge into one another and the overall effect is of a brilliant and seamless intelligence roving through the most difficult challenges of the modern world. Even where you completely disagree with Berry (as I do, about quite a lot) you know you are in the printed presence of an extraordinary mind. How does he write? A little as one imagines Jefferson might if he were alive today. One of my thwarted ambitions was to edit a selection of Berry for a British audience. Now, instead, all I need to do is recommend this one.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

The level of alcohol consumed at these lunches makes it unlikely that those attending them could do any work in the afternoon, let alone stand up - Gordon Sutton, *District Auditor*, reporting on junkies by Labour councillors in Doncaster

I don't want to join in this circus atmosphere that's out there at this time - OJ Simpson, refusing to comment on the \$21m in damages a jury ordered him to pay after deciding he killed his ex-wife and her friend

It's like a fresh, clean page in 1997 for me, and I hope in my travels I may be able to inspire other people to keep fighting and have courage - the Duchess of York, telling US television viewers she has her debts and her weight under control

It really makes you want to burst into tears. Who said I'm lining up with Labour? I am a humanitarian figure, always have been, always will be - Diana, Princess of Wales

I'm not getting married today. I'm in bed - Liam Gallagher, rock star

One of the few things on which all marketing academics and practitioners agree is that if the product is rubbish, no amount of hype will make it sell. The Referendum Party is a textbook example - Prof Patrick Barwise, *London Business School*

Why go out for a hamburger when you can have steak at home? - Paul Newman, actor, on being faithful to his wife, Joanne Woodward

Failed IRA suspect and her baby

Sir: The suggestion ("IRA suspect to be handcuffed during birth", 13 February) that Roisin McAleisley is to be handcuffed during the birth of her child is completely untrue.

The Prison Service made clear in January 1996 that women would not be handcuffed during childbirth. Appropriate security arrangements will always be put in place, but once a prisoner goes into hospital for the purpose of giving birth, any restraints are removed until such time as the prisoner is moved from the hospital back to prison.

This policy applies equally to Roisin McAleisley. RICHARD TILT, Director General, HM Prison Service, London SW1

Sir: We wish to express our dismay at the refusal, yet again, to grant bail to Roisin McAleisley.

It is impossible to imagine a justification for keeping an asthmatic, pregnant young woman in conditions which include being strip-searched twice daily, as well as before and after visits, in which in any case physical contact is precluded.

We concur in Amnesty's judgement that any arrangement resulting in a separation of mother and baby following the birth would amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment for both. We urge the Home Secretary to act immediately to ensure a humane outcome in this tragic case. The Rev Professor PATRICK HANNON, Chairman, Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas, Dublin

Sir: Whether or not Roisin McAleisley is guilty of any crime, her baby is certainly innocent. To sentence it to be separated from its natural carer and best food-source is nothing less than wicked. JANET BARLOW, Ravenstonedale, Cumbria

Media folk give marriage a bad press

Sir: Virginia Ironside's sad piece on marriage (12 February) instances her own and others' distress. She writes of her sense "I" being taken over by the "we" and concludes that for many people the institution of marriage is now simply too difficult to sustain.

I wonder if this is true for a higher percentage of journalists and media people than for others. People in these professions need to be individualistic: only if they have their own different voice are they likely to succeed in such a high-pressured competitive environment. Perhaps the very talents needed for this success make it hard to achieve the balance of "I" and "we" needed for marriage.

This would be a matter for themselves alone, except that they form a crucial part of the social climate - the ideas and outlook around all of us. Lack of belief in the sustainability of marriage may be an important factor in making marriage more difficult for all of us.

Normal humpy patches come to be seen as a sign of incompatibility, so the partnership should be ended. Sometimes this is necessary; often it is not. Given a climate in which

difficulties can be thought about (perhaps with some outside help) rather than acted upon, many of us can find constructive ways of balancing the "I" and "we". Amazingly, over 60 per cent of us still do sustain marriage or long-term partnerships. Let's celebrate that.

PAT HURFORD, St Albans, Hertfordshire

Sir: I read the recent proposals for a ten- or five-year marriage contract ("Thousands do it, but is it time we reformed marriage?", 10 February) with a sense of déjà vu. In the foreword to his novel *Brave New World* (1932), Aldous Huxley writes:

There are already certain American cities in which the number of divorces is equal to the number of marriages. In a few years, no doubt, marriage licenses will be sold like dog houses, good for a period of twelve months, with no law against changing dogs or keeping more than one animal at a time.

One wonders whether his other predictions will also come true. A LEWIS, Wilmshurst, Cheshire

In Scotland, the mail always gets through

Sir: It must be different in England and Wales, judging by the recent readers' letters complaining of poor deliveries of first-class mail. We live at the end of a half-mile of steep farm track; the only visible habitation is the farm itself, a quarter mile below our house. The mail arrives at the door daily, usually by 8am, often containing letters posted the previous day by one of our daughters in rural Devon or rural Northumberland.

Please, Lord, don't allow them to privatise the Post Office; many in Scotland would lose a treasured service. DEREK FABIAN, Milnora, Strathclyde

Sir: The best way would be for all mail to be stamped second class. The Post Office could not possibly allow a build-up of delayed mail if it was to do so. When the iniquitous two-tier system was introduced I resisted it for some time in the end succumbed. I shall in future stamp all my letters second class, including this one. ALISON LEAKY, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire

This letter, dated 12 February, arrived on 14 February

Archives in danger of being broken up? We can help

Sir: Professor Buchanan (Letters, 14 February) calls for a national agency to control the "degeneration of the national heritage" exemplified by the break-up of nationally important archives in the sale room.

The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts does already offer many of the services that Professor Buchanan supposes not to be available. It is, for example, one of our principal duties to "identify the owners of archival material with high heritage value" and subject to their consent to maintain a publicly available record of their holdings in the National Register of Archives, whose indexes are now widely

available on the Internet (<http://www.hmc.gov.uk>) as well as in the public search room here.

We are always willing to advise owners about the disposal of their archives by gift, sale or loan to appropriate national or local repositories, if this is what they want. We also regularly offer free guidance to owners who wish to retain their archives. A vital advisory role is also played by organisations such as the British Records Association and the Business Archives Council, the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre at the Wellcome Institute and the National Cataloguing Unit for the Archives of Contemporary

Scientists at Professor Buchanan's own former department, not to mention the network of local authority record offices.

We can also put repositories in touch with potential grant-awarding bodies and alert the latter to any major sales known to be pending. What neither the Commission nor any of its partners in the field can do is to compel an owner to consult us or prevent the sale of an archive in separate lots if that is the owner's chosen course. CHRISTOPHER KITCHING, Secretary, The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, London WC2

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. (Fax: 0171-293 2856; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

After Stephen Lawrence died in a 'racist attack', the police ran into a wall of silence. **Peter Popham** explains why

police thinking is vigorously rejected by the police themselves. "Words simply cannot express the enormous sympathy we have for the Lawrence family," Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Ian Johnston said, pointing out that 2,600 people have been inter-

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a man from the chest up. He is wearing a shirt with vertical black and white stripes. In the center of the chest is a diamond-shaped logo with the letters 'H.A.S.H.' inside. The man has dark hair and is looking slightly to the right. The background is dark and indistinct.

Stephen Lawrence: killed by those who took furtive territoriality and turned it into a perverted crusade

Johnny out of the local school. Not for racial reasons, God forbid, but to give him the best possible start in life with those who share his values. Move out of your house yourself for cleaner air, a bigger garden, less crime — never, ever, to get away from the festering racial tensions of the inner city.

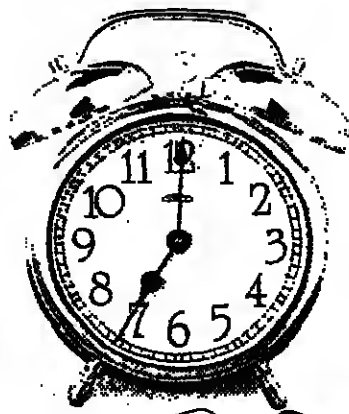
In the East End, the white working class has fled in huge numbers for the outer suburbs, the Green Belt and the pale wastes of deepest Essex, and this race has been an important factor in this Great Trek — hence the popularity of the politics of the like of Norman

In ways such as these, the lives of the self-styled champions of white communities are made more difficult. But the fundamental problem doesn't go away. Stephen Lawrence's killers remain free. Racial incidents in England and Wales rose by three per cent in 1995 to a total of 12,222. When the rampant and rampant and rampant ten-inch knives, or buried in comfortable layers of self-deceit and obfuscation, the primitive urge for territorial monopoly survives. Until we confront and defeat it, justice for Britain's blacks will remain a scarce commodity.

[illegible]

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I was very sad to hear of the death of Brian Connolly of The Sweet, who was an integral part of my teenage years: I remember many a sweaty night jumping up and down to the strains of Blockbuster. They did actually appear at our local nightclub in Hastings, a most unpleasant beery dive known as The Aquarium. I didn't actually make it but I do remember a girl from our school boasting that she had got into the dressing room and indulged in some very unladylike behaviour with him. Everyone seemed very

So this week we finally got to see what the land mine controversy was all about with a documentary video diary of Diana's trip to Angola. She seemed to divide her time between giggling and shooting intrusive photographers away. "I'm afraid I couldn't take the programme seriously. This woman is a Sloane through and through, and any amount of serious dressing-down for the occasion cannot disguise the fact that she is more at home shopping than trying to be Queen of our Hearts. Perhaps the public will fall for this and love her, while Fergie slanders her way round America cashing in and Camilla stares despairingly into the mirror. In the end though, they are all just posh bitch women supporting a system of inherited wealth that is unfair and exploitative. They are therefore interchangeable and we should spend no more time attempting to assess which one is better than the other.

[illegible]

هكذا من الراحين

no idol threat

The merest crack, and horrid-looking spirits will be among us

david aaronovitch



I must get down to Canterbury. Yesterday's news that the last remains of St Thomas à Becket (slaughtered on the medieval orders of Henry II in 1170) are to be temporarily reinterred by the Vatican this year will surely boost visitors to the cathedral. There, from April to October, we will be able to gaze on a golden box containing Thomas's shirt and bits and pieces of the saint himself. Unfortunately, the word "reinterred" is all too accurate in this case, since little is left of Mr Becket other than some skull fragments and a couple of goblets of brain. Alas! His killers did their work all too well.

These are, of course, good tidings. If only England's football fans had been aware of the return before Wednesday's disappointing match with the remains-stealing Italians, they could have taunted their opponents with a chorus of "Becket's coming home, he's coming home, he's coming home..."

Who knows what manner of inspiration might not have seized Matt Le Tissier when he rose to head that ball in the 32nd minute.

But wait a moment. Not everyone is delighted. The Prayer Book Society, for instance, is extremely worried about the consequences of letting the truncated Thomas return. The secretary of the society, Margot Thompson, is quoted as warning that "bringing relics back to the cathedral is going back to the theology of pre-Reformation days", before the break with Rome.

Having blobs of Becket brain on the premises was both "unnecessary and irreverent". The Rev David Streeter, director of the Church Society, was less absolute in his opposition - but nonetheless concerned. "Worship of relics is a well-outdated medieval superstition," he argued (as opposed, I guess, to all those trendy medieval superstitions still relevant today). He went on: "I urge people to go and look at the relics as artefacts, but to make them objects of worship is ludicrous and idolatrous."

Two things interest me about this reaction. The first is the fact that a debate begun in eighth and ninth century Byzantium should exercise 20th century Britons. For more than a century, the iconoclasts

and iconodules of the Eastern Empire battled over pictures, statues and relics of saints. The sound of marching feet from their eastern borders did not deter them from their battles as enemy forces invaded - forces who believed, impartially, that both sides would look equally good burned to a crisp under a pile of their own learned tracts and pamphlets.

But I am even more fascinated by the vision that the Rev Streeter and Ms Thompson have of their fellow citizens. Ms Thompson fears that the attraction of a return to the days before the Reformation may prove too much for us. Let loose from the restraining leash of Church doctrine, it would only be a matter of time before indulgences were being sold on the street, and the Office of the Holy Inquisition strode the land, sticking pointy bats on heretics and using them to heat town squares.

David Streeter's worries are less apocalyptic, but seem to encompass a concern that many of us might (were it not for his warnings) suddenly prostrate ourselves on the cold flags of the cathedral floor, and give ourselves over to idol-worship. In his mind's eye, he sees coaches diverted from Lourdes and various continental spouting Virgins, headed across the Channel to mutter mumbo-jumbo in front of a little gold box.

Our friends are, of course, gate-keepers. Gate-keepers are animated by a nagging belief that their fellow citizens are mostly credulous and superstitious fellows, whose capacity for barbarous thinking and behaviour is held in place only by the thinnest veneer of civilisation and education. The merest crack, and horrid-looking spirits will dance among us; suddenly, ignorance will once more be king.

In vain do you argue with gate-keepers that actually there is little to fear; that most of the people you know seem to be able to look at saint's remains without going bonkers; that it is incredibly hard to put the clock back, and that the trick is to move on. For they have their gate to keep, and it's no use your telling 'em that everyone else is travelling by a different path.

"...and Roadblock has closed all clockwise exits on the M25. Motorists are advised to close car windows this afternoon as pollution is expected to reach 'alarmingly dangerous' levels. Only upper-class passengers on the Pepsi Piccadilly line will be allowed to board Heathrow trains, and buses in Islington are restricted to 'socially necessary' stops."

No one has heard this particular traffic bulletin. But if you live in or travel through any of London's 33 boroughs it is unlikely to surprise you.

The nation's capital may be swinging, but it is certainly not moving. Gridlock has become a regular blot on the landscape. Earlier this month, more than 30,000 motorists clogged west London after Hammersmith Bridge was closed at short notice for at least two years for repairs to its 110-year-old frame.

More congestion has meant more pollution. The Government's own health limits for particulates - deadly tiny particles of dust produced mainly by cars - were exceeded at least once every week last year.

Worse things are happening underground. The Tube, which millions of Londoners and commuters rely on every day, is slowly falling apart. Twice last year, the system was brought to a standstill after electrical failures, trapping tens of thousands of passengers underground for hours.

"Parts of the network are just waiting for the coffin lid to be closed. They are just life-expired and we are fighting to make sure that sudden closures do not become a regular feature. The fact is we need more money for the whole system," said one Tube manager.

The Government is unconcerned. It sounded the death knell last year for the public service after announcing in the Budget that Tube managers would lose £430m from their Treasury grant over three years. Just to add to their troubles, ministers will announce in the next few weeks that the Underground is to be sold off - a move which has been expected ever since the Conservatives won the last general election.

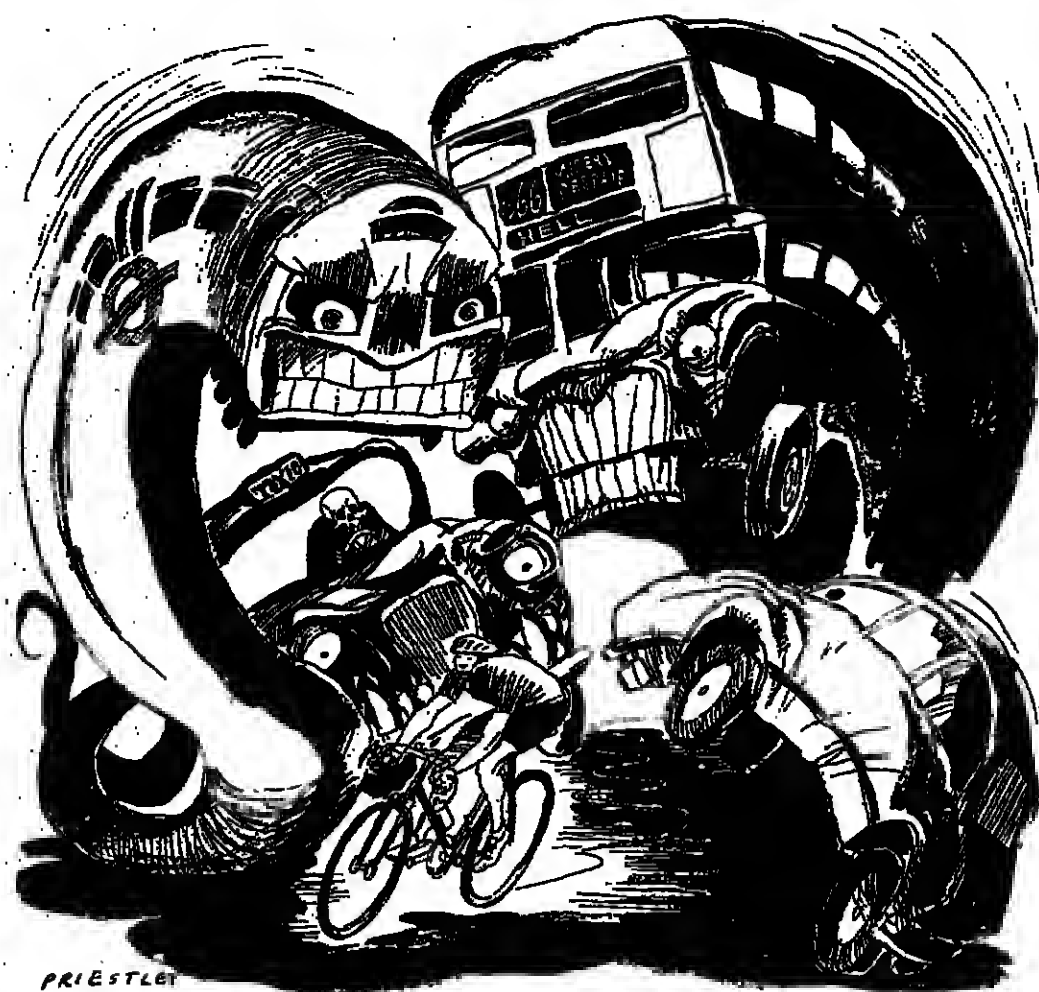
Labour knows that the dilapidated network needs £350m a year simply to keep going but is too frightened to produce a spending pledge - opting instead to fudge the issue with a pledge for more "public and private" sector involvement.

While politicians posture, passengers suffer. An emergency board meeting of London Underground's directors was held earlier this week to decide which services to cut in order to keep the trains running.

Despite the gloom, however, the capital has seen a rash of new rail projects. This year

London - the city that never moves

by Randeep Ramesh



The Tube is falling to pieces, the roads are clogged and crawling, pedestrians live in fear and the air is a soup of pollution. And what is being done about it? Nothing

should see a new high-speed train service, the Heathrow Express, running from Paddington to the airport. The Jubilee Line extension, a £2.6bn underground connection set to open next year, will link Stratford in east London to Westminster with a loop of track that runs south of the river with stops at Waterloo, London Bridge and a new station - planned to be the largest underground station in the world - at the site of the Millennium dome in Greenwich.

Along with the improvements on the Thameslink and the Docklands Light Railway, it is the biggest rail expansion in London since the 1930s, according to Irving Yass, director of transport and planning at London First, which represents business in the capital.

Local authorities are also trying to tackle vehicle prob-

lems. In the flagship Tory borough of Wandsworth, councillors have proposed a scheme - enforced by police - where drivers of cars that belch noxious fumes could face fines or penalty points on their licences. Tory councillors in the borough talk with the zeal of the newly converted. "We could all cut down on air pollution in the capital by limiting the number of car journeys we make," said Guy Senior, the chairman of the borough's technical services committee.

Westminster is also considering pedestrianising Parliament Square, Trafalgar Square and even Park Lane, in order to restrict the number of cars in the city centre.

Councils use meters and parking fines as major generators of revenue. Camden - where council tenants may be banned from owning cars under

new proposals - made a healthy £5m surplus from its parking restrictions last year and has now said it wants an extra £1m this year.

Not everyone is happy. Measures introduced by Westminster last year made it harder to park in busy West End streets. London theatres complained that the new restrictions were damaging business.

Other cities are closely following events in London. Because rest of the country has elected bodies, many are attempting to gently restrict car use through local initiatives. In Edinburgh, councillors have asked residents to hand in their car keys and instead join a "motoring club" where homeowners rent vehicles when they need them.

But most innovative schemes in London fall flat through a lack of funding. The Riverbus,

which took commuters along the Thames from Greenwich to Westminster and Chelsea, sank in the early 1990s after London Transport refused to extend bus and rail travelcards for the service.

Motor cars remain the capital's biggest headache. Although more than 80 per cent of commuters travel into the capital on public transport and only 14 per cent drive, it is enough to ensure that drivers in the rush hour crawl through the city at a little over 4mph.

It is an issue on which both motoring organisations and

environmentalists agree. A recent report by green groups claimed that traffic in London could be cut by a third over the next decade by encouraging more walking and cycling as well as coaxing businesses to promote public transport and car-sharing.

The RAC agreed and published an astonishingly frank critique of the motor car when it produced its own charter to "get London moving" earlier this month. The motoring organisation advocated pedestrianising Trafalgar Square, prioritising investment in public transport and told its members: "If any future government is in aim to get people out of their cars there is simply no alternative to massive investment in buses, trains, walking and cycling."

"We champion mobility, rather than the motorist," said the RAC's chief executive, Neil Johnson.

So, if there is so much consensus, why does nothing get done? The simple answer is that there is nobody to do it. The abolition of the Greater London Council in 1986 left no single authority able to take a strategic overview of London's transport problems.

Instead there is a minister for transport in London, an advisory and planning committee (LPAC), 33 local authorities - often with competing interests - and a Cabinet sub-committee chaired by John Gummer, the self-styled minister for London.

Hence planning tends to be either shambolic, as with the Docklands - where poor transport links are only just being improved - or non-existent, which has left the Government's bus-line program in the hands of local councillors unwilling to carry out unpopular policies.

Even former members of the Government can see the present system has its failings. "It is clear many transport issues in London have to be taken on a strategic basis and it would be clearly advantageous to be able to roll out a coherent program to tackle them," said Steven Norris, a former minister for transport in London.

Until London gets a voice, it will remain the only capital city in the Western world unable to champion a transport policy of its own. As Tony Banks, the Labour MP for Newham North West and the last chairman of the GLC, points out: "You can ask the mayors in New York, Paris or Tokyo what they have and they will say: a voice. Without one, London's case will not be heard."

Barry and the fickle finger of fame

You would know Barry Evans. Not his name, perhaps, but you would know the face - fresh, open, good-looking in a pedestrian way. Barry was famous once, a star even, at least in the domestic firmament. He began the Seventies as a television doctor (*Doctor in the House* and then *Doctor at Large*) but became a teacher in the TV sitcom *Mind Your Language*.

The situation was a room full of foreigners learning English; the comedy was... a room full of foreigners learning English. The most notable foreigners in the series were Françoise Pascal and her breasts and Evans found them quite a handful. The programme was axed in 1979 (revived for a season in the mid-1980s), Evans dropped out of sight and that was pretty much the last the public knew.

But life out of the limelight went on, and a week ago, Barry Evans went to work as usual. That was the last his friends and neighbours saw of him.

On Monday, police in Leicestershire stopped three people driving Evans' car - a J-reg Montego (not very Hollywood) - and went to his house, a bungalow in the village of Claybrooke Magna, Leicestershire. They found Evans' body that night, arrested the three on suspicion of murder, and ordered a post-mortem.

The actor was back in the spotlight - "Mystery of TV Doc's Murder" plastered across



The untimely death of a Seventies sitcom star this week highlights the temporary nature of celebrity, says Emma Daly

the tabloids, illustrated by that familiar, winsome grin.

"He was quiet, but everyone liked him. I remembered him from *Mind Your Language* and was gobsmacked when I saw him sitting in one of our cabs," Susan Middleton, who works at Crest Taxis, was quoted as saying. "At first, people knew him as Barry the actor, but over the years, he became Barry the taxi driver."

He had played that role in his last film, *The Adventures of a Taxi Driver*, a sub-*Carry On* title. It titters flick circa 1975, and a comedown from his movie debut, *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush*, an "adolescent romp" that became a cult hit. He starred in both with Judy Geeson, with whom he is said to have had a long affair. They never married.

Despite the post-mortem, police do not yet know how Evans died. His body was found, clothed, in his sitting room, and there were no obvious signs of a break-in. Police have released on bail the teenage girl and two men who were in the Montego and are waiting for the results of tests on Evans' body.

Locally, everyone knew about Evans' TV work, but, as neighbours said: "He was modest and never really talked about it."

Evans had not given up hope of a come-back. "What I want is a long run in *EastEnders*," he said last year. He had discussed

the options with his agent, Malcolm Knight. "Barry was still on the books - he had decided to stay out of the business for a little while, basically because he was stereotyped. We were beginning to talk about getting his career back on track."

Starring in a Seventies sitcom is apparently the television equivalent of sailing the Bermuda Triangle.

Richard O'Sullivan was *Man About the House* with Paula Wilcox and Sally Thomsett, the Caroline Quentin and Lesley Ash of the Seventies. Neil Morrissey and Martin Clunes should take note - Richard was so successful that he was given his own show, *Robin's Nest*. But in 1994, the *People* reported that Richard had "spoken from a clinic of his decline to being a hard-drinking depressive."

Paula Wilcox still works in *Life After Birth* on Channel 4, and in children's television, but Sally Thomsett's claim to fame has been a spread in *Hello!* to celebrate giving birth at the age of 46. This might not be unrelated to the fact that Wilcox played Chrissy, the sensible one, and that Thomsett played Jo, the dizzy blonde. As Tessa Wyatt, O'Sullivan's subsequent blonde, in *Robin's Nest*, put it: "You pay the penalty of becoming identified with a particular character so that people find it difficult to see you in any other light."

Thomsett, however, was not

averse to playing the same role over and over in life, if not on screen. "The Jo image has been very useful," she said. "I've been treated as a bimbo for years - and, I must say, it's rather pleasant. I've never carried my own suitcase."

The type-casting seems to have been particularly severe in the Seventies sitcom scene, perhaps because so many of the comedies were based on such old-fashioned caricatures - all men gagging for it, all women fighting them off, all foreigners stupid or strange, all homosexuals screaming queens, all doctors male and all nurses female.

What hope was there for Ian Lavender (*Private Pike*) after *Dad's Army*, or for Melvyn Hayes (*Gloria*) after *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*? The latter appeared (in the *Daily Mail*) under the headline: "After six kids, maybe they won't think I'm gay."

Then there were fewer channels and fewer hours of airtime but more money to lavish on long-running home-made serials. The companies milked their comic actors for all they were worth, placing them in show after show until the public finally cracked and turned off.

And if the actor is not pulling in the punters he is out: Dennis Sellers, a talent agent who started in the business 61 years ago, said: "People do become unfashionable - it's part of the business we're in. Someone like Barry, who was

very successful and then runs out of steam, is not of value. It's nothing to do with talent."

Barry Evans was no Simon Dee, fallen from grace and riches to the gutter. Evans sank gently into decline. It seems, moving to the bungalow in Claybrooke Magna four years and working first for Crest Taxis before setting up on his own. His co-star, Françoise Pascal, had a bumpier ride. The parties went on but the parts dried up. She moved to the United States, discovered cocaine, beat her addiction and shopped her fellow celeb users to the *News of the World*.

Ms Pascal too is still on the books at Mr Knight's agency, but has had no acting work for years. "Even *Celebrity Squares* don't call me anymore," she told the *Mail*. "And I used to be queen of those game-shows."

Mr Sellers is philosophical. "TV can be a monster. While it can make people big it can also kill them," he said. And once they have sunk into obscurity, said to say, they normally hit the headlines only when they die. There is the odd exception, though.

When a character in Dawn French's sitcom *The Vicar of Dibley* said: "There hasn't been a bus through the village since Hughie Green died," the entertainer re-surfaced, demanding an apology from the BBC. "I would be grateful if you would inform people that I am very much alive," he said crossly.

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Labour thinks again about ending BT ban

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The Labour Party is retreating from its policy to allow an early end to the ban on British Telecom broadcasting entertainment down its phone lines after fears by shadow ministers that the approach could kill off the cable companies.

In a clear shift in its approach, Labour has signalled a much more sympathetic stance towards the cable companies after a new and serious threat to their business emerged in the shape of digital terrestrial television. The move will be met with huge relief in the cable industry which has spent two years intensively lobbying Labour on the issue.

At its party conference in 1995 Labour stunned the cable companies by revealing an agreement giving BT, chaired by Sir Iain Vallance, a phased end to the broadcast ban in return for the group's commitment to extend fibre-optic "superhighway" links into schools.

An influential report a couple of years ago by the Trade and Industry Select Committee also suggested the ban should be reviewed in 1998, giving rise to the possibility that the restriction would be lifted.

There were howls of protest from cable companies on the

grounds that allowing BT to compete in the television market would prejudice their £12bn, 10-year, investment programme to homes. So far about half the cash has been spent. The Government's policy is to wait until 2001 to review the ban, with no guarantee that it will be removed.

Sir Leon Brittan, European Trade Commissioner, said he saw no reason why a global telecommunications trading agreement should not be reached by today's deadline. He was speaking in Geneva as negotiators expressed doubts that an accord could be reached because of the tough line the US had taken at the talks. The US wants freer access to domestic markets in many countries before agreeing a pact. Sir Leon said it would be "crazy" not to reach a deal.

However Geoff Hoon, the Labour technology spokesman, said yesterday that the whole industry had changed rapidly since the original "deal" with BT. "Digital terrestrial television and digital satellite television are going to make a fundamental difference. If I was a cable company I'd be seriously nervous at the moment," he said. He also suggested BT's pri-

orities in offering television services using sophisticated computer compression technology may have changed. "The other question here is what BT now wants. In their recent trials of interactive television in Colchester they seem to have found people didn't want to sign up for movies through the service. They seem to be evaluating the future for the project."

Though the trials to 2,500 homes ended last June, BT has yet to decide the future of the technology. One suggestion is that it is much more likely to be used to provide high-speed Internet access services through copper phone wires than broadcast entertainment.

Mr Hoon said Labour was still committed to reviewing the ban next year if the party wins power, but it would do so in the light of new developments in the telecommunications industry. A favourable outcome for the group now seems much less likely. However Mr Hoon insisted the schools agreement with BT still stood.

The threat from digital terrestrial television, which bypasses cable or satellite delivery methods, has already hit cable share prices heavily. Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB has linked with Granada and Carlton to bid for a licence to offer a block of digital services using the



New number: Geoff Hoon (left), Labour Party technology spokesman, and Sir Iain Vallance, chairman of BT

technology. BT also has links with BSkyB and one theory was that the telephone giant may have abandoned its television ambitions for fear of damaging its links with the satellite operator.

The Trade and Industry Select Committee is also reviewing its approach to the broadcast ban and held hearings with BT and the cable operators last week. Labour's policy was broadly modelled on the committee's previous conclusions.



chairman and a Labour MP, said it would be wrong to characterise the move as a shift of direction.

However he said one question which would feature in the committee's conclusions was whether the ban had actually prevented BT from investing heavily in fibre-optic links. He added:

Pearson scandal prompts disbelief in City

Nigel Cope

The City yesterday poured scorn on Pearson's explanation for the accounting scandal at its Penguin books division in America saying it was "unbelievable".

Media analysts expressed disbelief that the accounting scandal, which was revealed on Thursday and has led to a £100m charge against Pearson's 1996 accounts, could possibly have been masterminded by one person, in a relatively junior position and with no apparent financial motive.

Pearson yesterday confirmed that the elaborate scheme had been conducted by a woman in the accounts receivable division of its Penguin USA business in New Jersey.

Over a period of six years she had been granting unauthorised discounts to booksellers in return for early payment.

Pearson said yesterday: "At this stage this is how it seems from how she has explained it. But the investigation is continuing and until it goes further one cannot be absolutely sure."

One analyst said: "I don't think they can just brush it under the carpet like this. They can say what they like but do we believe them? Just a brief look at this tells you that something smells. I find it unbelievable that one little old lady did this for no financial motive."

Pearson said yesterday that no other employees at Penguin USA had been suspended. However, it repeated its intention to take the appropriate action should more details emerge.

The company has yet to make a decision on whether to take legal action against Arthur Andersen, its former auditors. A spokesman for the Andersen office in Chicago said: "We are unable to comment on this matter as it is not our policy to comment on client affairs."

It is also not yet clear whether American book retailers who did not receive the discounts might take legal action against Pearson for failing to treat all retailers on equal terms as agreed under an undertaking with the American Booksellers' Association in 1994.

It is also unclear if senior management at Penguin USA were aware of the accounting scheme. Peter Mayer, who retired as chairman of the division late last year, was unavailable for comment yesterday.

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BellSouth sizes up Vebacom

Chris Godsmark

BellSouth, the largest regional phone company in the US, is evaluating a deal to join Vebacom, the German telecommunications partnership, following the withdrawal by Cable & Wireless from the alliance.

C&W pulled out of Vebacom a week ago blaming "differences in priorities" with Veba, the German utility giant and its partner in the venture. The two sides had clashed over the inclusion of RWE, another large utility, in the link-up and the German companies' ambitious plans to invest billions of Deutschmarks building a fixed telephone network. Veba is to pay C&W £820m to buy out its 45 per cent stake in Vebacom.

The move by C&W has already been seen by analysts as the precursor to a shift in the pattern of worldwide telecommunications alliances, with widespread speculation that the British group is seen to join the Global One partnership between Deutsche Telekom, France Telecom and Sprint of the US.

Sources suggested BellSouth's interest in Vebacom was a natural progression in its German ambitions. The company, based in Atlanta and providing local phone services to 21 million customers in nine US states, already has a mobile telephony partnership with Veba in the E-Plus alliance. BellSouth took a 21.4 per cent stake in E-Plus in 1993. BellSouth, the sources claim, had held negotiations to partner Veba in fixed phone lines before the C&W tie-up to form Vebacom. The US operator has aggressively built up a portfolio of alliances and investments in 17

countries outside the US. It also has a strong enough balance sheet to fund the likely £500m cost of joining Vebacom, with post-tax profits last year of \$2.86bn (£1.8bn).

A spokesman for BellSouth declined to comment on the development. "We talk to everybody and there's no secret in that but we never discuss speculation."

Another regional US phone group, SBC, had been put forward as a possible new partner in Vebacom. However, one senior executive close to the alliance dismissed the idea as "unlikely".

Separately, Cable & Wireless yesterday revealed the third senior executive appointment at C&W Communications, the £5bn group formed out of the merger of its Mercury Communications subsidiary with three cable companies. Martin Wright, 41, is to become director of human resources. He is currently personnel director for Hong Kong Telecom, in which C&W has a near 60 per cent stake.

Sources suggested that Mercury's head of personnel, Robert Johnston, had been seen as the most likely internal candidate, but his appointment had been rejected by Dick Brown, C&W's chief executive. It has also emerged that Christopher Chadwick, Mercury's head of customers services, resigned from the company just before Christmas for "personal reasons". Peter Howell-Davies, Mercury's chief executive, has been taking responsibility for the customer services job, a key role in Mercury as it battles with BT and other rivals, until the formation of C&W Communications, planned for April.

Chubb price tag hits Williams shares

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Williams shrugged off criticism yesterday that it was overpaying for Chubb as the market gave its agreed £1.23bn takeover bid an initial thumbs-down by marking its shares sharply lower. Five years ago Williams narrowly failed to buy Rascal, which then owned the locks and alarms group, for little more than half its latest cash and shares offer.

Roger Carr, chief executive, pledged £40m of integration benefits by the end of next year and said achieving that level of profit enhancement would sharply reduce the apparently demanding multiple of earnings it recommended bid implied. Analysts thought that was a conservative estimate of the

benefits of merging the two businesses. While welcoming the commercial logic of the deal, however, a 10 per cent fall in Williams' shares after the deal was confirmed underscored worries about the price being paid. With no underwriters for the share element of the combined cash and paper offer, yesterday's 35.5p tumble in the value of Williams' shares to 302.5p wiped almost £70m from the value of the offer.

The acquisition of Chubb, which still has to clear regulatory hurdles in a number of different territories, creates the world leader in fire protection and security. It puts Chubb's mainly old-Commonwealth businesses together with Williams' Yale and Kidde

brands, both strong in North America. Mr Carr said it was a perfect fit, giving an important boost to Williams' ambitions in the Far East, where Chubb had created a strong business from its Australian base.

Williams' offer, which it said represented a 37 per cent premium to Chubb's market value before rumours of the deal sent its shares soaring earlier this week, is based on two Williams shares and 704.12p in cash for every three Chubb shares. After yesterday's fall in Williams' share price yesterday, the bid valued Chubb at 435.7p a share, or £1.23bn. Chubb's shares closed yesterday 5p higher at 425p.

The jump in Chubb's share price on Thursday by 79p, or 23 per cent, to 420p is being in-

vestigated by the Stock Exchange. News of the proposed bid is thought to have leaked after Williams put in place a new £1bn banking facility earlier this week.

Williams also made a forecast of its 1996 profits yesterday, estimating profit before tax and exceptional items of £243m from sales of £1.82bn. Earnings per share are expected to be 39.1p, or 24.1p adjusted for a £97m exceptional disposal profit, and a final dividend of 9.25p will be proposed.

As well as improving Williams' geographical spread, Chubb takes the group into new security and fire protection product areas. In addition to shared areas such as fire extinguishers, locks and control panels, Chubb has strong positions

in electronic monitoring and manned guard services which will complement Yale and Kidde's leading positions in hotel security and hazard sensors.

Mr Carr said £26m of the expected £40m two-year profit-enhancement programme would come from integration benefits such as the consolidation of regional corporate administration. At least £7m would come from better operational performance, where Williams is expected to have plenty of scope to increase Chubb's lower margins.

A further £7m is slated for profits from additional sales as the combined companies benefit from wider distribution channels. The cost of achieving those on-going benefits will be a one-off £30m.

Lloyds TSB staff set for bonanza

Magnus Grimond

The 82,500 staff at Lloyds TSB could pick up around £2,500 each after Britain's biggest domestic bank yesterday announced record profits of £2.51bn for last year. Lloyds is setting aside £100m of its profits to share with employees. Including a profit-related pay scheme and the recently announced inflation-beating 5 per cent pay rise, the bonanza could add up to 16 per cent to an average salary of £15,500.

However, the news failed to allay union fears about job cuts in the wake of the merger in late 1995 between Lloyds and TSB. Noel Howell of the banking union Bifu said the profit-sharing would only be a one-off, which would not increase employees' pensionable salary. "They are going to have to go further than that and the key issue is job security," Bifu claims 10,000 jobs and 650 branches are at risk.

The Bill to enable the merg-



Defending the cuts: Sir Brian Pitman chairman and Sir Peter Elwood (left) chief executive

er legally to go ahead will have its second reading in early March and the union is lobbying Parliament to include a requirement that local communities are consulted before branches close.

Lloyds axed 4,200 jobs last year and Sir Brian Pitman, who this month became chairman of the bank, defended the cuts.

"We get new competitors arriving every week. You only keep jobs by winning," he said. Lloyds warned that further job cuts were in prospect this year. Sir Brian was speaking as Lloyds unveiled the first full-year results of the combined businesses of Lloyds, TSB and the former Cheltenham & Gloucester

ter housing society, acquired for £1.7bn in 1995. Pre-tax profits leapt from £1.65bn to £2.51bn in the 12 months to December, in line with analysts' expectations, although a final dividend of 9p, taking the total to 13.2p, was slightly better than forecast.

Sir Brian said he was aiming to "benchmark" Lloyds against the best companies in America, including Coca-Cola and General Electric. "By benchmarking with these companies, we have shot from a higher level than ever before." As part of this, Lloyds has introduced a new measure of its performance, "economic profits", which attempts to factor in the risk-weighted cost of capital, put at 10.1 per cent for the bank. This showed profits rising 69 per cent to £1.06bn last year.

Lloyds said it was setting aside an additional £39m to cover claims following the 1994 pensions "mis-selling" scandal, taking its total provision to £200m. Investment column, page 23

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4326.70	+12.20	+0.3	4816.00	4015.30	3.37	14000			
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FTSE SmallCap	2335.05	+5.00	+0.2	2335.05	1954.06	2.91			
FTSE All-Share	2107.21	+9.52	+0.5	2107.21	1791.95	3.51			
New York	6884.34	+32.71	+0.5	6884.34	5032.94	1.95			
Tokyo	13688.06	+278.10	+1.5	22666.80	17303.65	0.89			
Hong Kong	13239.95	-222.86	-1.7	13868.24	10204.87	3.16			
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6.38			6.40			5.60			

CURRENCIES									
£/\$			£/DM			£/¥			
1.6221	-0.02%	1.5385	0.6105	+0.35	0.6503	162.11	-0.01%	1.4713	
1.6221	-0.02%	1.5385	0.6105	+0.35	0.6503	162.11	-0.01%	1.4713	
1.6221	-0.02%	1.5385	0.6105	+0.35	0.6503	162.11	-0.01%	1.4713	
1.6221	-0.02%	1.5385	0.6105	+0.35	0.6503	162.11	-0.01%	1.4713	
1.6221	-0.02%	1.5385	0.6105	+0.35	0.6503	162.11	-0.01%	1.4713	

Statistics as of 14 February

150 من الاجل



JEREMY WARNER

More hope than reality in Internet revolution

That the present holders of commercial wealth and power are just going to roll over and let the new generation of entrepreneurs tickle their tummies is just not credible. They'll fight like alley cats

Everyone these days seems to have an opinion about the Internet and its potential to transform the world. Like much of what's on it, however, the difficulty is separating the wheat from the chaff, the nonsense and noise from the well-informed and perceptive. One person who ought to fall into the latter category is Andrew Grove, chief executive of Intel. What he says has to be treated a bit carefully because as the world's largest producer of computer micro-chips, his commercial interest is in getting as many people wired as possible, regardless of what use or value it is to them.

Even so, he's got an interesting take on how the Internet is going to change many of our industries. Two of the most obvious examples are media and banking.

What the Internet does is provide an alternative method of distribution for media products. Because relatively few people so far are hooked up, its impact is for the time being limited. But once a certain critical mass is reached, which might be put at 20 to 30 per cent of households, then Dr Grove foresees almost boundless potential for bypassing traditional distributors/packagers of media products.

Take our own industry - newspapers. The Internet already allows you to download most national newspapers each morning, and many foreign ones as well. Furthermore, it will eventually allow you to unbundled es-

tablished products, selecting and customising your newspaper, perhaps automatically, from a series of different dailies. This in itself could transform the economics of newspapers. Add in the fact that a very large proportion of classified advertising is likely to disappear onto the Internet, and newspapers as presently configured could well be in trouble.

If this is true of the media, it is equally so with banking and many other service industries. What this means in economic terms is there is likely to be a quite significant shift of wealth away from established centres of value to new and younger ones. The Internet provides a powerful tool for attacking entrenched and dominant market positions. But before we all get too carried away with Dr Grove's starry-eyed predictions it should be pointed out that there are two rather large constraints on the Internet's power to reconfigure the global economy.

The first is a simple commercial one. Joel de Rosnay, director for development at France's Cite des Sciences et de l'Industrie, reckons that by the turn of the century, some \$200bn will have been invested world-wide in Internet infrastructure. But the amount of commercial revenue generated by it will still be stuck at just \$5bn. What this tells us is that for the time being, the Internet is more about hope than reality - its real commercial value doesn't justify the amounts being

spent on it. If they haven't already, bankers and other financiers are eventually going to cotton onto this and the very optimistic business plans on which many Internet projects are based will be challenged. This is going to put quite a break on growth.

The second constraint is a more brutal one. That the present holders of commercial wealth and power are just going to roll over and let the new generation of Internet entrepreneurs tickle their tummies is just not credible. They'll fight like alley cats to keep their traditional markets and power bases. In other words, there will be a very sizeable backlash, taking political as well as commercial forms.

So although Dr Grove is undoubtedly right about the transforming powers of the communications revolution, he may well be wrong about the timescale. Progress is unlikely to be as rapid as he and others at the cutting edge of these new technologies hope and believe.

What should we be making of the extraordinary rise and rise of the Microsoft share price, which has doubled in less than a year? In part it reflects a wider phenomenon - America's extraordinary stock market bubble. It's also got something to do with hero worship of Bill Gates. Feted and sought after where ever he goes as a genius and guru, he's now worth more than \$20bn.

Trailing some distance in arrears are the real economic fundamentals of Microsoft's business and prospects.

I should be careful not to be churlish here, for these are undoubtedly excellent. There can be few businesses in the world where there are as good. Microsoft still has a virtual monopoly of PC operating system software - and monopoly has always been the touchstone of business success. It is also rolling out some promising new products. But can any of this justify the heady valuation Microsoft now commands? The probable answer is that so long as the present boom in US stock markets continues, the Microsoft share price is safe. But if it should falter, then the price looks highly vulnerable.

The two things are linked in more ways than might be thought, for quite a few of the factors that drive the American stock market boom also drive the Microsoft share price. A recent study suggested that perhaps as much as half of US economic growth is being generated by the new computer and communications technologies. While this may be an exaggeration, the point is well made. The American corporate and entrepreneurial renaissance is a technology driven phenomenon. The belief - now quite widely held in the US, I kid you not - that the business cycle, and therefore the stock market cycle, is a thing of the past, is fed by companies like Microsoft, demand for whose products just

seems to grow exponentially.

But as everyone knows sentiment can change very rapidly. Here are some of the factors that might eventually swing it against Mr Gates. No monopoly can go on forever, and there are already signs that the Microsoft one is under threat. Ironically, one of these threats comes from the Internet, where there can be no monopoly. Networking can be easily be accomplished using so-called "dumb" terminals as through a PC, for the computer power can be supplied centrally. In other words, there may be no long term need for highly priced PCs, the lynchpin of Microsoft's market.

The other threat comes from Mr Gates himself, who is showing an increasing propensity to use Microsoft as a way of indulging his fancy. Money is being poured into Internet related projects and the pursuit of artificial intelligence like there's no tomorrow. As Mr Gates himself puts it: "We are in a good position to take a very long term view and invest properly in these things". Whether this is another way of saying that Microsoft can afford to squander its money remains to be seen. Not that anyone can object, given that Microsoft has no need of funding from the capital markets and is still 24 per cent owned by its founder. Nor given his track record can anyone challenge the Gates vision of the world. But does it add up to good long term shareholder value?

Opel and Mercedes-Benz raided over 'price-fixing'

Katherine Butler
Brussels

European Commission competition inspectors have carried out dawn raids on the offices of the German car makers Mercedes-Benz and Opel in connection with allegations of price- and distribution-fixing, EU officials revealed yesterday.

Brussels sources warned that both companies could be stripped of their exemptions from EU rules that ban exclusive distribution arrangements if inquiries produce evidence of illegality.

The raids followed complaints from consumers who were repeatedly blocked when they tried to purchase the models they wanted in countries where they can be bought most cheaply. It is understood that complaints allege breaches of the EU's 1995 ruling on car dis-

tribution. This permits restrictive dealership and servicing agreements between manufacturers and sales outlets but only subject to strict conditions aimed at giving car buyers more opportunity to shop around to take advantage of the single European market.

EU competition Commissioner Karel van Miert renewed the car industry's longstanding "group exemption" from normal competition rules in June 1995 but insisted on giving dealers greater independence from manufacturers and specifically banned any impediments to the right of consumers to purchase a car anywhere in the Community.

News of the crackdown on Opel and Mercedes came as the Commission complained that so-called parallel trade in cars, which occurs when nationals of one EU country opt to buy a vehicle in a cheaper country, is be-

ing blocked in Belgium, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands.

Price comparisons of the EU's 75 best-selling models released by the Commission yesterday shows a gap of more than 20 per cent between the lowest and highest prices for 40 cars. On 1 November list prices varied most for Fiat, Ford, Opel, Citroën, Volkswagen, Nissan and Mitsubishi cars. And prices for some small cars varied by more than 30 per cent.

Britain has joined the ranks of the most expensive member states in which to buy a car according to the survey. The Commission says this is due to price hikes by manufacturers and the rise in sterling's value.

Fifteen of the 75 models looked at were most expensive in the UK including the Opel Corsa and Astra, the Peugeot 106 and 306, and the Renault Megane. Britain was cheapest

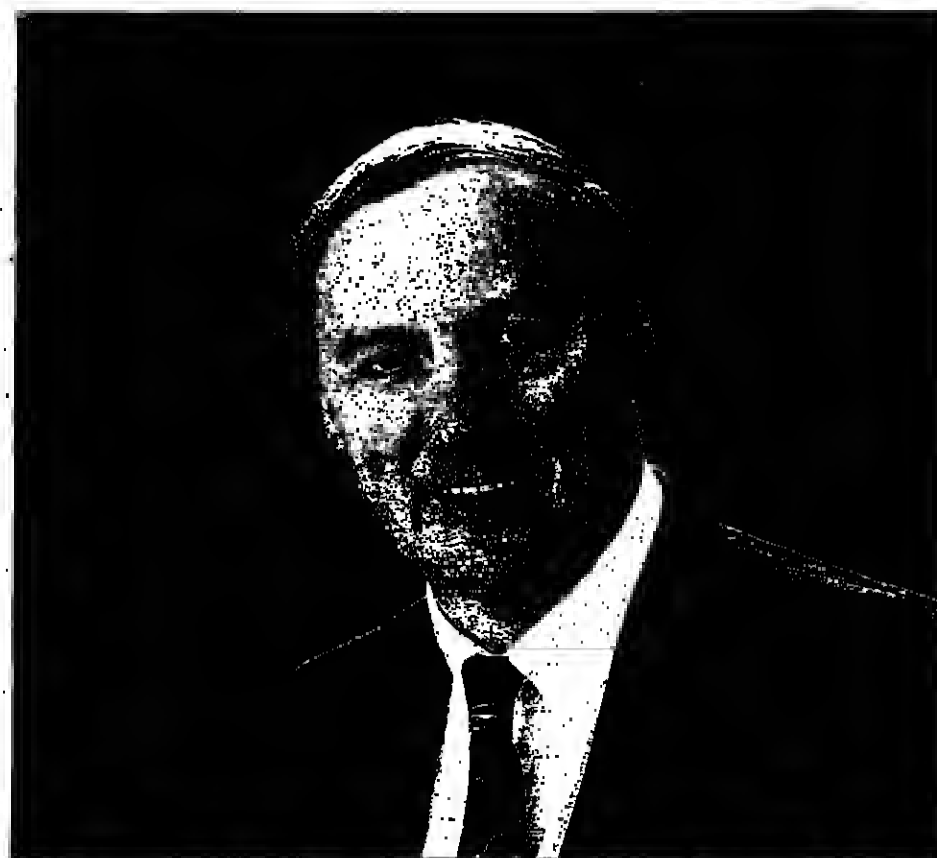
for only three models: the BMW 730i and Volvo's 850 and 960.

Buyers will find no bargains in Germany or France which had the highest list prices in the EU. Both countries each had 30 of the dearest models. By contrast, the Netherlands and Portugal are the cheapest countries for cars.

The list price for an Opel Astra in Britain was 32.8 per cent higher than for the equivalent in Portugal. The difference is attributed to exchange rate-induced price increases.

The Commission's six-monthly car price surveys aim to highlight the opportunities for parallel trade and to pressure car makers into creating a genuine single market.

Volkswagen and its subsidiary Audi are already under investigation for alleged malpractice in relation to pricing and distribution.



Booting out impediments: Karel van Miert insisted last year on giving car manufacturers greater independence and conferring on car buyers the freedom of Europe

Last-ditch attempt to avert US air strike

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

Virtually non-stop negotiations continued yesterday to prevent the potentially devastating strike by American Airlines pilots due to start at midnight last night, that would shut down the largest US carrier and cost the country \$200m (£123m) a day.

As talks here under the aegis of a Federal mediator approached the deadline, pressure was mounting on President Bill Clinton to use his emergency powers and declare a 60-day cooling-off period, during which American's operations would carry on as normal while arbitrators came up with a settlement binding on both sides.

The White House yesterday was refusing to tip its hand, as Kenneth Hipp, chief mediator, professed himself "somewhat more encouraged" by developments. But, Mr Hipp warned, "major obstacles" still remained, and management and pilots' union alike have reported next to no progress in the last few days.

The main sticking points are pay - where the company has offered a 6 per cent rise between 1997 and 2000, and the pilots are seeking 11 per cent - and the airline's plans to replace turbo-propellers with small jets at its commuter airline subsidiary, American Eagle.

If the strike goes ahead, an estimated 40,000 travellers a day would be stranded. American, whose proposed alliance with British Airways is under regulators' scrutiny, accounts for 20 per cent of all air travel in the US. It has large hubs at Dallas, Chicago and Miami, and dominates the Caribbean market. The airline cancelled most foreign flights and some round trip domestic flights yesterday.

Weekend of wooing for Forest as rival suitors press claims

Nigel Cope

The battle for control of Nottingham Forest enters a new phase this weekend with both of the rival groups planning to meet shareholders and the club's supporters association.

The Albert Scardino-led consortium is due to meet shareholders and the supporters' association in the next few days in an attempt to enlist support for its £18m offer.

The meetings will be hosted by Sir David White, chairman of Mansfield Brewery and the Nottinghamshire Health Authority who Mr Scardino this week recruited to be chairman

of the club if the bid is successful. The Scardino consortium hopes to use the meetings to persuade shareholders on the merits of its offer ahead of the crunch emergency meeting to decide the future ownership of the club on 24 February.

The Scardino consortium will meet the supporter association on Sunday. On Monday it will host an "informal dinner" for shareholders at the club.

Sir David, a shareholder in Forest as well as an enthusiastic supporter, said yesterday: "I have been impressed by the way this bid is being handled. What Nottingham Forest needs is professional management to

back-up the hard work being done on the pitch."

The rival group bidding for Forest, led by Nigel Wray and local author Phil Soar, is also lobbying shareholders support.

It too will meet the supporters on Sunday with a meeting with shareholders to follow.

The Wray-Soar consortium has criticised the Scardino offer saying that two-thirds of the cash is in return for redeemable preference shares which will be redeemed by the venture capital backers when Forest is floated. It claims this structure means that £13.6m of the investment is little more than a loan.

Footsie gallops to record high

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Shares on Wall Street could not sustain their latest dramatic surge yesterday. But their gain the previous day, along with a further slide in sterling's exchange rate, helped shares in London set a record.

The FTSE 100 index climbed by nearly 14 points to close at 4,341. Across the Atlantic, investors took advantage of the Dow Jones index hurtling through the 7,000 barrier on Thursday to take profits yesterday, despite new figures signalling the absence of immediate inflationary pressures in the American economy. The index was 12 points lower

at 7,010.89 by mid-morning. The Dow's gain of more than 1,000 points in only four months reflects investors' optimism about the strength of the US economy, although some experts remain fearful that share prices could fall sharply from their giddy heights. Just two months ago Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, warned about the "irrational exuberance" of the financial markets.

A batch of statistics yesterday showed an unexpected fall in prices charged by manufacturers in January, along with flat industrial production and unchanged consumer confidence. The general picture was one of steady growth putting no pressure on the Federal Reserve to increase interest rates in the near future. Jonathan Basile, an economist at HSBC Markets in New York, described the figures as "Fed-friendly".

Marilyn Schajda, an economist at Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette, said: "The economy is slowing down from the torrid pace of the fourth quarter."

The harsh winter explained the absence of any increase in industrial output last month. Snow and storms led to a fall in hours worked in manufacturing and mining.

Energy output rose sharply, also thanks to the weather, and output of business equipment - mainly computers and trucks - built up speed. Analysts said the

total production figure was likely to rebound in February. Even with the wintry slowdown, manufacturing output last month was 5.1 per cent higher than a year earlier.

Yet the continuing recovery in industry has not yet fed through into higher prices at the factory gate. Separate figures showed that these fell by 0.3 per cent last month, their first decline since October 1994.

Lower oil prices accounted for the unexpectedly good news, and should feed into producer prices for the next few months.

Separately, the University of Michigan's index of consumer sentiment was unchanged between January and February. Market report, page 24

Between the lines of Pitman's shorthand

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

Sir Brian Pitman's position at the top of British banking has only been enhanced by the first full year's performance of Lloyds TSB, the financial services behemoth he has created and now chairs. As well as being Britain's biggest domestic bank, the group is the UK's third-largest life insurance company and probably took a bigger share of the new mortgage market than any other lender last year.

But the headline numbers are impressive too. Since the December 1995 reverse takeover of Lloyds by TSB, profits have soared 52 per cent to £2.51bn, producing a stunning 48 per cent return on average shareholders' equity, close to double the previous year's figure. According to Sir Brian's new economic profit measure, which attempts to measure returns after deducting the risk-adjusted cost of equity, the bottom line has fattened 69 per cent to £1.06bn in 1996.

It is little wonder the bank's shares have outperformed the rest of the stock market by a quarter since the merger, rising another 1.5p to 503.5p yesterday. The raw figures do, however, need more than a little interpretation.

First off, integration has muddied the waters. Stripping out the 1995 charge of £425m for TSB and another £75m charged last year for restructuring Lloyds Abbey Life, 100 per cent-owned since last December, would trim the profits growth back to 24 per cent. Within that, probably the biggest boost came from a full-year's contribution from Cheltenham & Gloucester, the former building society for which Lloyds paid £1.7bn in 1995.

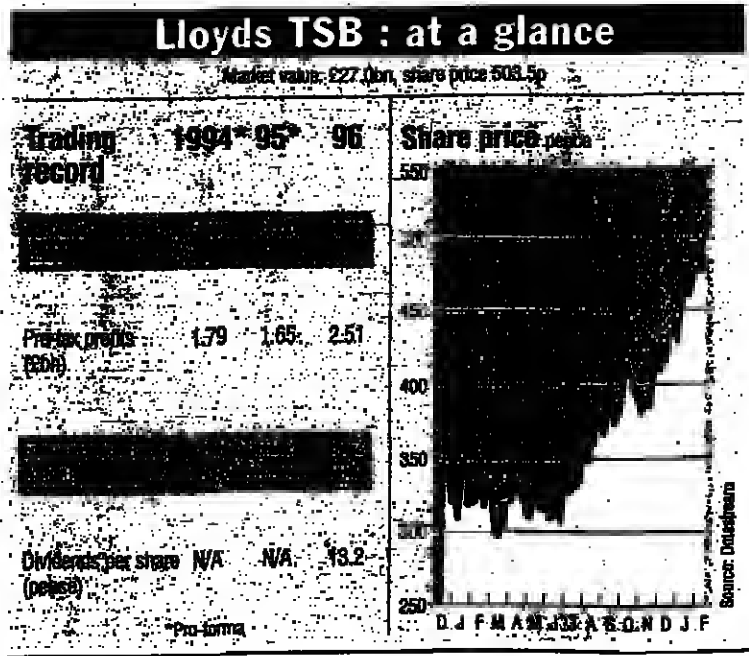
The addition of C&G, which raised its profits contribution from £67m to

£336m, was a key factor in the increase from £1.27bn to £1.72bn in the core retail financial services operations. Most of the 23 per cent increase in earnings came from C&G and mortgages now represent around 45 per cent of the group total.

That has had the happy effect of increasing the quality of Lloyds' loan portfolio. Arrears at C&G run at around half the industry average, so the addition of its mortgage book has helped dilute the risks of Lloyds' existing problem lending.

Thus bad debt provisions tumbled from £533m to £37m last year. Lloyds is boasting that for the first time, its total outstanding provisions of £2.55bn are greater than the level of non-performing loans.

The underlying business of Lloyds is clearly of high quality and Sir Brian has made all the right strategic



moves so far, eschewing investment banking and US adventures to focus almost solely on the UK market. He continues to search for another building society and possibly another insurance company.

But the real never dies and Lloyds' dependence on the UK could prove a handicap when it finally turns. That moment could be close: last year's bad debt charge of 0.4 per cent is a level not seen since 1988, just ahead of the last banking crash.

Meantime, profits this year of £2.95bn would put the shares on a forward p/e of 14. Hold.

Bounce goes out of Grosvenor

While its peers in the managed pub sector have continued their recent relentless rise, shares in the Slug & Lettuce pub chain Grosvenor Inns have had a dreadful year, falling from a high of 285p to a recent low of 165.5p. After a good bounce towards the end of last month to about 220p, half year results yesterday put the boot in once again and the shares sagged 17.5p to 206p.

The fall yesterday came despite a 25 per cent jump in pre-tax profits to £1.10m, struck from a 36 per cent rise in sales to £11.8m. Earnings per share were 17 per cent better at 5.7p and a half year dividend of 3.025p, up 10 per cent, is to be paid.

Analysts took the company to task for its failure to translate a 43 per cent rise in sales at its core Slug & Lettuce chain into a similar rise in profits. A

rise of just 27 per cent reflected continuing investment in the brand and the cost of beefing up its food offering. Two new sites in Windsor and Upper St Martin's Lane in London recovered from a slow start and are now beating their budgets, but if Grosvenor is really to capitalise on the brand it needs to roll Slugs out faster than it can currently manage.

That means making quicker progress in releasing funds from the half of its business which is going nowhere - some wine bars such as Hodgsons on Chancery Lane and a handful of taverns, which are really nothing more than hog-standard old fashioned pubs. In the books at around £12m in total, a sale of those assets would free up much-needed capital for the 20 Slug & Lettuce openings the company promises but arguably can't really afford just yet.

The other main worry to emerge from yesterday's figures was the early exit from the Bar Central concept whose failure was underlined by the discount to net assets represented by the £2m it achieved on disposal. Grosvenor also had to pay Inn-preneur half a million pounds to take five duff pubs off its hands. With all that baggage it is hardly surprising the market won't put the shares on a Wetherspoon or Regent Inns sort of rating.

On the basis of forecast profits of £2.4m this year, the shares trade on about 16 times prospective earnings per share. That's a discount to the rest of its fashionable sector but deservedly so. Grosvenor is doing the right things, focusing on its core brand, but until it gets out of its funding bind the shares are high enough.

IN BRIEF

- The Bank of England yesterday announced a review of the future of British Invisibles, following growing concern in recent years that the City needs a more effective body to promote the financial services industry. The review working party will be chaired by Douglas Hurd, the former foreign secretary who is now deputy chairman of National Westminster Bank.
- The Bank of England said the working party was being launched with the agreement of BI itself, the City Corporation and Scottish Financial Enterprise. It will cover promotion of inward investment, improvement of access to overseas markets and better statistics. The retirement of the chairman of BI, Sir Brian Pearce, and its director general, Alison Wright, "presents an opportunity to review the evolution of the promotion of the whole of the UK's financial services".
- Jardine Matheson Holdings has sold its half-share in the life assurance group Jardine CMG Life to its joint venture partner, Colonial, for \$163m (£100m). Colonial is making the acquisition through its subsidiary CMG Asia.
- Halifax Building Society, the UK's biggest mortgage lender, is coming into line with its rivals by cutting interest rates on all its fixed-rate mortgage offerings. Two-year fixed rates now start at 6.45 per cent, down from 7.25 per cent previously, three-year fixed rates at 6.90 per cent down from 7.85 per cent, and five-year fixed rates at 7.65 per cent down from 8.45 per cent.
- Renault, the French car and truck maker, warned that its 1996 operating loss would be considerably higher than the market expected because of a difficult economic climate. The company declined to say what it considered to be the market's consensus forecast for its 1996 operating result.
- A government-backed company unexpectedly agreed to cover the entire losses suffered by Kizu Credit Co-operative, once Japan's largest credit cooperative. The Deposit Insurance Corporation said it will give ¥1,034bn (£5bn) to a special bank set up to dispose of the bad loans.
- The World Trade Organisation asked Japan to narrow the gap between taxes on domestically produced liquors and imported ones by 1 February 1998, a Japanese Finance Ministry official said.
- Inchcape has formed a joint venture with the Bank of Scotland subsidiary NWS Bank to provide car loan facilities and related services. It will be called Inchcape Financial Services.

market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100
4341.0 + 13.9

FTSE 250
4606.0 + 19.3

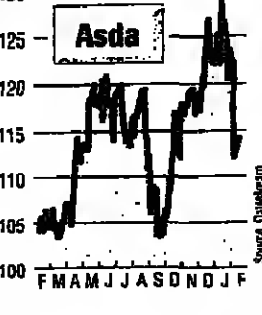
FTSE 350
2142.0 + 7.3

SEAG VOLUME
915m shares,
50,288 bargains

Gilt Index
N/A

Share spotlight

share price, pence



Misys stretches to new peak on talk of US connection

Is Misys, the high-flying software group, about to plug into a new American connection? Stories are circulating that talks are taking place which could lead to a much greater US involvement, perhaps even a bid for full control.

As the stock market moved on, seemingly inevitably, to yet another peak Misys rose 37.5p to a 1,137.5p high, pricing the group at more than £95.5m. Towards the end of last year Misys beefed up its transatlantic operations with two acquisitions, worth £65m. And it has since said it is looking at a further five possible buys, although not necessarily in the US.

But the latest stories do not seem to be concentrating on Misys making another takeover swoop. There is talk of a deeper US involvement either through a company buying into the group or making a bid. No Misys director was available

to comment. The shares have been a rewarding investment. Five years ago they were 203p; in the past 12 months the price has gained more than 400p.

Although best levels were not held, Misys stretched to another closing high, up 13.9 points at 4,341. Significantly, though, the supporting FTSE 250 index has failed to retain its record-breaking thrust.

After last month's exuberance it has produced some low-key displays and despite a 19.3-point gain to 4,606 it still remains below its record.

Best-performing blue chip was - again - Smith & Nephew, the health group. Another 8p gain took the price to 196p with thoughts about a possible Unilever strike continuing to create the excitement. Since the market became aware the Anglo-Dutch group was nursing predatory ambitions S&N has

climbed 17p, a remarkable run by its standards. Reckitt & Coleman, the household goods group also showed signs of being a Unilever target, added a further 10.5p to 768p.

Unilever rose 4.5p to 1,537.5p, reflecting Dutch interest and suggestions it will follow Shell and declare a share split.

Asda, rumoured to be planning to move into motorway catering, slipped 0.75p to 114p. It is said to be one of the bidders for Welcome Break, the motorway services chain. Granada has undertaken to sell to overcome monopoly objections.

Four possible bidders are

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

and Centrica and it had seemed that the Redland building materials group would be dominated for removal.

However, Williams' expulsion should only be temporary. When the shares issued for Chubb are counted it should, even if any converting mutual societies complicate the calculations, make a swift return. Chubb shares gained 4.5p to 424.5p.

A takeover bid in the rarefied air of investment trusts lifted Pilot Investment Trust 3p to 122p with predator Under-Valued Assets 2.75p down at 156.5p.

Hanson improved 1.5p to 92.25p. The final stage in the giant four-way merger is due to be completed on Monday week when shares in the Energy Group, comprising the Peabody coal business in the US and the old Eastern Electricity, start market life.

Profit warnings took their

toil. Cedardata, a computer group, crashed 13p to 123.5p. Dailywin, making watches in Hong Kong, 30.5p to 58.5p and Fieldens, supplying agricultural vehicles, reversed 13p to 52.5p.

Ashurst Technology jumped 29.5p to 95p; it has completed an intriguing transatlantic tie-up with a US baseball bat maker. Under the deal Ashurst's alloys will be used in the production of baseball as well as softball bats. Copyright Promotions, on its Mr Men US deal, gained another 18.5p to 109.5p.

The strange goings-on at Burtonwood Brewery, the 130-year-old Warrington group, lifted the shares to a 205p peak at one time.

The highest recorded deal was at 200p and the shares finished at 203.5p. Jarvis Porter, the drink labels group, put 0.3p at 248.5p. Fibernet rose 15p to 184.5p.

Taking Stock

Gabriel Trust, an AIM-listed financial group, has increased its involvement in Oxford Charfield Fund Management. It has acquired a further block of shares, in exchange for its own, lifting its stake to 26.11 per cent.

Gabriel, run by David Pearl, aims to supply equity capital to small companies. It first revealed its attraction for Charfield, which embraces the Waverley unit trusts, in December when it picked up a 14.85 per cent interest.

Charfield is run by Mark Flawn Thomas. Its shares held at 45p; Gabriel rose 1p to 17p.

Wedderburn, the property group that has admitted a "significant" acquisition is near, jumped 5.5p to 24.5p. The story is that it is taking over an oil services company which could transform Wedderburn's outlook.

Share Price Data

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High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	%	Index
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	%	Index
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100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	%	Index
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100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
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100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	%	Index
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
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100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
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100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
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100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
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100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
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100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00
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100	100	Asda	114.00	-0.75	-0.6	114.00

Price Data									
in a sterling column where stated. The yield is in percent, as a percentage of the share price. The price is in pence, as a percentage of the share price. The price is in pence, as a percentage of the share price.									
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THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 15 FEBRUARY 1997

Foreign Exchange Rates as a week

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	DOLLAR	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-MARK	Spot
US	1.5221	1.5215	1.5210	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
UK	0.7845	0.7845	0.7845	0.6925	0.6925	0.6925	0.6925	0.6925	0.6925
France	16.6500	16.6500	16.6500	1.3360	1.3360	1.3360	1.3360	1.3360	1.3360
Germany	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360
Italy	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360	1.9360
Spain	166.6400	166.6400	166.6400	166.6400	166.6400	166.6400	166.6400	166.6400	166.6400
Japan	160.3600	160.3600	160.3600	160.3600	160.3600	160.3600	160.3600	160.3600	160.3600
Sweden	13.7600	13.7600	13.7600	13.7600	13.7600	13.7600	13.7600	13.7600	13.7600
Switzerland	1.7360	1.7360	1.7360	1.7360	1.7360	1.7360	1.7360	1.7360	1.7360
Netherlands	1.6660	1.6660	1.6660	1.6660	1.6660	1.6660	1.6660	1.6660	1.6660
Australia	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460
New Zealand	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460
South Africa	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460	1.5460
India	47.8400	47.8400	47.8400	47.8400	47.8400	47.8400	47.8400	47.8400	47.8400
Singapore	1.3660	1.3660	1.3660	1.3660	1.3660	1.3660	1.3660	1.3660	1.3660

OTHER SPOT RATES as a week

Country	Spot	Country	Spot	Country	Spot
Argentina	100.0000	Chile	100.0000	Colombia	100.0000
Brazil	100.0000	Costa Rica	100.0000	Czech Republic	100.0000
Canada	100.0000	Croatia	100.0000	Dominican Republic	100.0000
Denmark	100.0000	Ecuador	100.0000	El Salvador	100.0000
Finland	100.0000	Honduras	100.0000	Hungary	100.0000
France	100.0000	Indonesia	100.0000	Israel	100.0000
Germany	100.0000	Italy	100.0000	Japan	100.0000
Greece	100.0000	Malaysia	100.0000	South Korea	100.0000
Ireland	100.0000	Mexico	100.0000	Thailand	100.0000
Italy	100.0000	Norway	100.0000	Turkey	100.0000
Japan	100.0000	Peru	100.0000	USA	100.0000
Netherlands	100.0000	Philippines	100.0000	UK	100.0000
Norway	100.0000	Poland	100.0000		
Sweden	100.0000	Portugal	100.0000		
Switzerland	100.0000	Romania	100.0000		
USA	100.0000	Slovakia	100.0000		
UK	100.0000	Slovenia	100.0000		
		Spain	100.0000		
		Sweden	100.0000		
		Switzerland	100.0000		
		Thailand	100.0000		
		Turkey	100.0000		
		USA	100.0000		
		UK	100.0000		

Tourist Rates as a week

Country	Spot	Country	Spot	Country	Spot
Argentina	100.0000	Chile	100.0000	Colombia	100.0000
Brazil	100.0000	Costa Rica	100.0000	Czech Republic	100.0000
Canada	100.0000	Croatia	100.0000	Dominican Republic	100.0000
Denmark	100.0000	Ecuador	100.0000	El Salvador	100.0000
Finland	100.0000	Honduras	100.0000	Hungary	100.0000
France	100.0000	Indonesia	100.0000	Israel	100.0000
Germany	100.0000	Italy	100.0000	Japan	100.0000
Greece	100.0000	Malaysia	100.0000	South Korea	100.0000
Ireland	100.0000	Mexico	100.0000	Thailand	100.0000
Italy	100.0000	Norway	100.0000	Turkey	100.0000
Japan	100.0000	Peru	100.0000	USA	100.0000
Netherlands	100.0000	Philippines	100.0000	UK	100.0000
Norway	100.0000	Poland	100.0000		
Sweden	100.0000	Portugal	100.0000		
Switzerland	100.0000	Romania	100.0000		
USA	100.0000	Slovakia	100.0000		
UK	100.0000	Slovenia	100.0000		
		Spain	100.0000		
		Sweden	100.0000		
		Switzerland	100.0000		
		Thailand	100.0000		
		Turkey	100.0000		
		USA	100.0000		
		UK	100.0000		

Interest Rates as a week

Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Argentina	10.00%	Chile	10.00%	Colombia	10.00%
Brazil	10.00%	Costa Rica	10.00%	Czech Republic	10.00%
Canada	10.00%	Croatia	10.00%	Dominican Republic	10.00%
Denmark	10.00%	Ecuador	10.00%	El Salvador	10.00%
Finland	10.00%	Honduras	10.00%	Hungary	10.00%
France	10.00%	Indonesia	10.00%	Israel	10.00%
Germany	10.00%	Italy	10.00%	Japan	10.00%
Greece	10.00%	Malaysia	10.00%	South Korea	10.00%
Ireland	10.00%	Mexico	10.00%	Thailand	10.00%
Italy	10.00%	Norway	10.00%	Turkey	10.00%
Japan	10.00%	Peru	10.00%	USA	10.00%
Netherlands	10.00%	Philippines	10.00%	UK	10.00%
Norway	10.00%	Poland	10.00%		
Sweden	10.00%	Portugal	10.00%		
Switzerland	10.00%	Romania	10.00%		
USA	10.00%	Slovakia	10.00%		
UK	10.00%	Slovenia	10.00%		
		Spain	10.00%		
		Sweden	10.00%		
		Switzerland	10.00%		
		Thailand	10.00%		
		Turkey	10.00%		
		USA	10.00%		
		UK	10.00%		

Bond Yields as a week

Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Argentina	10.00%	Chile	10.00%	Colombia	10.00%
Brazil	10.00%	Costa Rica	10.00%	Czech Republic	10.00%
Canada	10.00%	Croatia	10.00%	Dominican Republic	10.00%
Denmark	10.00%	Ecuador	10.00%	El Salvador	10.00%
Finland	10.00%	Honduras	10.00%	Hungary	10.00%
France	10.00%	Indonesia	10.00%	Israel	10.00%
Germany	10.00%	Italy	10.00%	Japan	10.00%
Greece	10.00%	Malaysia	10.00%	South Korea	10.00%
Ireland	10.00%	Mexico	10.00%	Thailand	10.00%
Italy	10.00%	Norway	10.00%	Turkey	10.00%
Japan	10.00%	Peru	10.00%	USA	10.00%
Netherlands	10.00%	Philippines	10.00%	UK	10.00%
Norway	10.00%	Poland	10.00%		
Sweden	10.00%	Portugal	10.00%		
Switzerland	10.00%	Romania	10.00%		
USA	10.00%	Slovakia	10.00%		
UK	10.00%	Slovenia	10.00%		
		Spain	10.00%		
		Sweden	10.00%		
		Switzerland	10.00%		
		Thailand	10.00%		
		Turkey	10.00%		
		USA	10.00%		
		UK	10.00%		

Money Market Rates as a week

Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Argentina	10.00%	Chile	10.00%	Colombia	10.00%
Brazil	10.00%	Costa Rica	10.00%	Czech Republic	10.00%
Canada	10.00%	Croatia	10.00%	Dominican Republic	10.00%
Denmark	10.00%	Ecuador	10.00%	El Salvador	10.00%
Finland	10.00%	Honduras	10.00%	Hungary	10.00%
France	10.00%	Indonesia	10.00%	Israel	10.00%
Germany	10.00%	Italy	10.00%	Japan	10.00%
Greece	10.00%	Malaysia	10.00%	South Korea	10.00%
Ireland	10.00%	Mexico	10.00%	Thailand	10.00%
Italy	10.00%	Norway	10.00%	Turkey	10.00%
Japan	10.00%	Peru	10.00%	USA	10.00%
Netherlands	10.00%	Philippines	10.00%	UK	10.00%
Norway	10.00%	Poland	10.00%		
Sweden	10.00%	Portugal	10.00%		
Switzerland	10.00%	Romania	10.00%		
USA	10.00%	Slovakia	10.00%		
UK	10.00%	Slovenia	10.00%		
		Spain	10.00%		
		Sweden	10.00%		
		Switzerland	10.00%		
		Thailand	10.00%		
		Turkey	10.00%		
		USA	10.00%		
		UK	10.00%		

Life Financial Futures as a week

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close	Settlement
Long Call	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Long Put	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short Call	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short Put	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Long Call	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Long Put	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short Call	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short Put	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Long Call	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Long Put	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short Call	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short Put	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Life FTSE Index Option as a week

Settlement	Price	Settlement	Price	Settlement	Price
Long Call	100.00	Long Put	100.00	Short Call	100.00
Long Put	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Long Call	100.00	Long Put	100.00	Short Call	100.00
Long Put	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Short Call	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Long Call	100.00	Long Put	100.00	Short Call	100.00
Long Put	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Short Call	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Long Call	100.00	Long Put	100.00	Short Call	100.00
Long Put	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Short Call	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00

Commodities as a week

Commodity	Price	Commodity	Price	Commodity	Price
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00

100 Largest Insurance Funds

Fund	Assets	Fund	Assets	Fund	Assets
Long Call	100.00	Long Put	100.00	Short Call	100.00
Long Put	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Long Call	100.00	Long Put	100.00	Short Call	100.00
Long Put	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Short Call	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Long Call	100.00	Long Put	100.00	Short Call	100.00
Long Put	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Short Call	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Long Call	100.00	Long Put	100.00	Short Call	100.00
Long Put	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00
Short Call	100.00	Short Put	100.00	Long Call	100.00

SECTOR AVERAGES

Sector	Average	Sector	Average	Sector	Average
Oil	100.00	Gold	100.00	Silver	100.00

sport

Croft spins in to spare Atherton

Cricket

DEREK PRINGLE
reports from Christchurch
New Zealand 229-5
v England

Robert Croft is a spin bowler who defies logic, or at least the kind found in most county changing-rooms around England. He also takes wickets, which is a useful habit, especially when your captain has inserted a side on a grassy pitch in the firm belief that his pace bowlers will have put him in an unsalvageable position by tea.

With his chirp, spin and aggression, the 26-year-old Croft has been England's find of the winter, an assessment supported by the assistant bowling coach, John Emburey, who now reckons the Glamorgan player on tour is a far better version of the one he knew in England.

"He adjusts to the pace of the wicket so quickly," Emburey said. "He's a damn good bowler who's improving all the time." Quite simply, where others failed to make a mark, Croft - as he did when England most needed it in the second Test in Wellington - stamped his now indelible authority by taking the prime wickets of Pocock, Astle and Fleming, as England clawed their way back into the game after a disconcerting morning session had threatened to expose Mike Atherton's contentious decision to field.

Asking the opposition to bat first in Tests matches is always a risky proposal. So far Atherton has done it on five occasions, winning once, drawing three times and losing the other. It is a poor win-rate considering the high-risk element involved: namely that if your opponents get a big score, you are inevitably going to have to bat last on a pitch that is both worn and unpredictable.

If it was logic then it flew in the face of local advice, which, like that in Johannesburg last

winter (where Atherton's decision to insert was absolved only by one of the great Test innings), regards what is above your head as more important than what is below your feet. As that was blue sky, the consensus outside the England dressing-room was to bat, despite the verdancy of the playing surface.

What undoubtedly complicated Atherton's decision, however, was New Zealand's late inclusion of Heath Davis, a seam bowler brought in to replace a veteran spinner, Dipak Patel. With the Kiwis needing to win, Atherton may have bowled simply in order to prevent the home side's pace-oriented attack from having first use of a juicy looking track. When Bob Willis tried this ploy in Adelaide during the 1982-83 Ashes series it

THIRD TEST
FIRST DAY

badly backfired when Australia won comfortably by an innings. Atherton would probably argue that bowling first has proved to be the right thing in every match so far played on this leg of the tour and that New Zealand pitches, which tend to start damp, are at their best for batting on days two and three.

It is a theory that is borne out historically and on the 35 occasions a team have been asked to bat first in Tests on New Zealand soil, losses outnumber wins 18 to seven.

Had the England captain not become so infected with the insistence of his coach, David Lloyd, on dealing solely with positives, he might also have pointed out that England again wasted the new ball, with Dominic Cork in particular looking as if he was searching for wickets through style rather than content.

The official line is that he is struggling for rhythm, which may be true. But even though he managed to pick up Bryan Young, bowled through the

gate to one of the horrible shots of the series, his mind seems to be on another cloud to the long, white one over here.

Young's dismissal did give England an early chance to pressurise the debutant Matthew Horne, who, after getting off the mark with an edged four over second slip, looked as if he had both the technique and temperament to prosper at this level.

Unfortunately Horne's chance to consolidate his place will probably have to come later rather than sooner, as he suffered a fractured left wrist during his otherwise competent innings of 42. It was an injury caused by Darren Gough, the man who eventually got him out, caught by Graham Thorpe as he edged a lifter to first slip.

It was one of several injury problems endured by New Zealand, who began the day without their captain, Lee Germon, after he had failed a fitness test on an injured groin.

As the team's wicket-keeper, as well as their leader, he took two men to replace him, with Stephen Fleming taking over as acting captain and a relieved Adam Parore taking the gloves. It was a combination that deceived to batter, and, according to many, Germon is only in the side for his PR and not his repertoire.

Fleming's promotion at the tender age of 23 over that of Blair Pocock - the only man in the side to have had first-class experience of captaincy - was a bold move. It was not so long ago that Fleming was carpeted, along with two of his teammates, for smoking cannabis during a tour to South Africa.

They say, however, that power can change a man, and after the reckless manner in which he gave up his wicket in Wellington, the tall left-hander was a model of concentration and calm.

When he is set, he can look as classy as any left-hander bar Brian Lara, and he twice left extra cover gaping in admiration as sumptuous drives off Phil Tufnell and Gough flashed by. There are still flaws and just when it looked as if he had played his captain's role almost to perfection, a rash attempt to dominate Croft saw him efficiently stumped by Alec Stewart for 62.

It was a close decision which the umpire Daryl Hair gave out without recourse to the third umpire, an arrogant act since the technology is there to be used. Hair has done this before and, a few years ago, this unshakeable belief in his own judgement once cost England a couple of crucial run-outs in Sydney.



High flier: New Zealand's Chris Cairns evades a lifting ball by the England paceman Andy Caddick on the opening day of the third Test. Photograph: Chris Turvey/Empics

FIVE NATIONS' CHAMPIONSHIP

Welsh pride
up against
French form

DAVID LLEWELLYN
reports from Paris

When a French rock, Richard Dourthe, meets a Welsh hard case, Scott Gibbs, in Paris this afternoon woe betide anyone caught in the middle. The pair of them will be at the epicentre of the confrontation between France and Wales at the Parc des Princes.

Wales, with a miserable run of 10 Five Nations defeats on the trot stretching back 22 years in the French capital, and here on the rebound after perpetrating another dismal run with a home defeat against Ireland two weeks ago, do not intend rolling over and letting the Tri-colours get away with anything.

For their part France will be looking to complete the second leg of what the nation hopes will be a Grand Slam and wrap up fixtures between the two countries at the Parc before moving to a purpose-built stadium elsewhere in the capital next year.

But there's a slip twist. Five Nations cup and lip. Having lost half a dozen first-choice players through injury or suspension the last thing the French want is for Dourthe, the erstwhile bad boy - he has been variously accused of kicking England's Ben Clarke, punching Wales' Iwan Evans and spitting at Neil Jenkins as well as breaking the ribs of his closest friend, Thomas Castaignède, courtesy of a late tackle - to misbehave today.

Remarkably, the heaviest penalty Dourthe has had imposed on him was a one-man hit ban for the Clarke incident. Dourthe, 22, who plays at full-back for Dax, missed the French victory over Ireland last month after suffering concussion following a training ground collision, and he was one of the six enforced changes to the side, coming in at centre for Castaignède, who is recovering from a broken jaw.

Today, promises Dourthe, he will be a good boy. "I have gone over the top several times," he admitted. "I am too impulsive. A modern player should not lose control as I have done, but I believe I have turned that corner and you will now see a different Richard Dourthe."

Not too different though. France will need his aggressive edge and fiery spirit. Wales are dangerous. Allan Bateman, like Gibbs, a prodigal from rugby league, poses a very real mid-field threat and Dourthe is aware of this. He says: "The

rugby league players have transformed the approach of this Welsh side."

Dourthe, who was barely a month old when his father Claude played for France in 1975 on the occasion of Wales' last victory at Parc des Princes, must have some subliminal memory of that Gallic slip-up because he insists: "Deep down I fear the Welsh far more than I fear the English."

In their opening match the English stuck rigidly to their game plan and in my opinion did not display much of a threat. Whereas even in defeat against Ireland two weeks ago the Welsh showed a spirit that we have not seen from them in a long time."

If Wales are to storm the French line successfully they will need an exemplary performance from their pack. Against Ireland they committed the cardinal sin of losing the ball in the tackle and turning over possession to their opponents too frequently which meant they could not provide a sound platform for their backs to work on.

That performance prompted a veteran of the 1975 triumph, Charlie Faulkner, to say: "Some of the forwards are very lucky to be given another chance. You feel like putting a few back in Mother's house window. If the attitude and application isn't totally different from that shown against Ireland then they will get a hiding. Nice guys win nothing, especially at Parc des Princes."

Talking of nice guys, Dourthe kicked 20 points when France beat Wales 40-33 in Cardiff last September. Despite that Dourthe continues to talk up the Welsh. "Apart from the ultra-hard Gibbs-Bateman pairing at centre," he explains, "they also have Iwan Evans, who remains a redoubtable finisher, Arwel Thomas, who has established himself at fly-half, not to mention a formidable back row. This Welsh side is singing a very different song from the one we faced last September. If Wales win in Paris, they will win the Five Nations' Championship."

That "if" reverberates around the concrete bowl of the Parc des Princes. Wales who were relieved to see their full-back and goal-kicker Jenkins, and Bateman come through a rigorous work-out yesterday, will have an awful lot to do.

Paris is braced for an epic encounter. History and form favour France, but pride and rekindled passion could lift Wales to greater heights.

FRANCE v WALES			
at Parc des Princes, Paris			
J-L Sadourny	Colomiers	15 N Jenkins	Pontypridd
L Leflamand	Boulogne	14 I Evans	Llanelli
R Dourthe	Dax	13 A Bateman	Richmond
S Glas	Boulogne	12 S Gibbs	Swansea
C Llanisien	Brive	11 G Thomas	Swansea
P Carbonneau	Brive	10 A Thomas	Cardiff
C Calviato	Toulouse	9 R Howley	Swansea
M Dal Maso	Agen	1 C Lous	Cardiff
J-L Jordani	Toulouse	1 D Young	Cardiff
H Mirion	Toulouse	4 Gareth Llewellyn	Harlequins
G Merle	Montauban	5 M Rowley	Pontypridd
R Castel	Béziers	6 S Williams	Neath
F Pelous	Dax	7 C Quirvan	Richmond
A Benazzi	Agen	8 C Jarvis	Swansea

Replacements: 16 S Viles (Brive), 17 D Accou (Paris), 18 G Accou (Paris), 19 P Arnold (Swansea), 20 O Heane (Cardiff), 21 S Tries (Cardiff), 22 M de Rongier (Toulon). Referee: P Marshall (Aus). Kick-off: 2.0 (BBC Wales 2.0).

Golding holds sway

Sailing

STUART ALEXANDER

Nike Golding was set to take Group 4 first across the finish line for the third time in three legs of the BT Challenge last night. With just 24 hours and 25ft miles to run of the 1,250 from Wellington to Sydney he had a 10-mile advantage on Chris Tibbs in Concert.

But Tibbs was slightly better positioned to the north of Golding and determined to make up for the disappointment of being dismasted on the second leg from Rio de Janeiro. Making ground was Simon Walker, third in Toshiba and heading for a top three place in all three legs as

well as staying second to Golding on combined elapsed times. Nearing the finish of a complete circumnavigation is the Frenchman Christophe Augin in the 60ft Geodis. He is forecast to win the Vendée Globe single-handed non-stop round the world race at Les Sables d'Olonne tomorrow in a new record time of 115 days, four less than the previous best set by Titouan Lamazou.

Lying sixth, but due to climb higher when given time allowances for his rescue of Raphael Dinelli, is Britain's Pete Goss, safely round the Horn, recovered from performing surgery on his own elbow, and the only competitor in a 50ft yacht, Aqua Quorum.

Harris returns to Warrington

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

Warrington's Great Britain stand-off, Iestyn Harris, is back in training with the club and is in line for a recall in the Challenge Cup tie against Sheffield Eagles next weekend.

Harris, the current first choice for the Test side, has been frozen out at Wilderspool since being transfer-listed at a world record £1.3m last season.

He has been training on his own while Warrington and prospective buyers, St Helens, have drifted further and further apart in their negotiations.

But now Warrington have told him to come back to Wilderspool to train with their squad and Harris has accepted the approach.

A statement from the club said: "Iestyn Harris has been instructed to report back to the club for training. This is following the failure of St Helens to put forward anything like an acceptable proposal for his transfer."

"St Helens approached the player and unsettled him at a crucial time for the club and the severity of the sentence outweighs the severity of the offence," David Howes, the club's chief executive, said.

Saints and Wigan have each been fined £15,000 for their televised brawl in the wake of

them is prohibited - but he is still on the transfer list."

A spokesman for Harris said he had always been willing to continue to play for Warrington but still wanted a move.

Saints have confirmed that they will appeal against Bobbie Goulding's eight-match ban for his high tackle on Wigan's Neil Cowie in the Challenge Cup tie last Saturday.

"It is five years since Bobbie was last sent off and we feel the severity of the sentence outweighs the severity of the offence," David Howes, the club's chief executive, said.

Saints and Wigan have each been fined £15,000 for their televised brawl in the wake of

Goulding's tackle. Half the fine has been suspended for a year in each case but the clubs, who have been told they have no right of appeal, are to seek legal advice.

Carlisle and the amateurs, Dudley Hill, who were also involved in a brawl in their tie last weekend, have each been fined £1,000, of which £750 is suspended.

Halifax have signed another young French player, the 18-year-old second-rower, Jerome Guisset, from St Estève.

First and Second Division clubs knocked out of the Challenge Cup last weekend played in the first round of the new Silk Cut Plate competition tomorrow.

Old Boys turn the corner

Hockey

BILL COLWILL
reports from Cologne

Old Loughtonians, who have had bad luck recently with injuries as well as losing their National Indoor title, had a change of fortunes here yesterday when they won their opening game of the European Indoor Club Championship A Division.

They beat the Spanish champions, Aldeasa Valdeluz, 5-3 in an exciting game before a near full house. In a match in which they never looked back after opening the scoring in the sixth minute, their Scottish pair,

Colin Hector and David Ralph, were outstanding and with Julian Halls showing his usual non-stop aggression, the coach, Billy McPherson, had no need to call upon himself.

The arrival of Chris Bloor, six minutes into the game, brought the first goal in a splendid move started deep in his own half by Ralph, carried on by Alan Philpot for Bloor to finish. Although the Spanish equalised shortly afterwards, a penalty stroke save by Jerry Garner gave the Old Boys confidence and they stormed back.

Chris Gladman was on hand to sweep in after Hector's penalty corner had been

partially saved to put them back in the lead. When, three minutes to the interval, Ralph's stick was chopped in the circle, the Scottish international put them further ahead from the penalty spot. A defensive lapse helped the Spanish reduced the arrears to 3-2 at half-time.

Ralph was again the provider 11 minutes into the second half for Gladman's second goal and then five minutes later set up Bloor for his second.

Although Jorge Romero capitalised on another lapse of concentration for the final goal, Loughtonians were, by now, home to a well deserved victory.

Cannock must do without Crutchley

PETER COLWILL

Bobby Crutchley will be missing from the Cannock line-up when they visit his old club, Hounslow tomorrow, as the Premier leaders will be looking to reassert themselves after their defeat at home to Canterbury last week. Crutchley broke a thumb in that game but expects to be fit

for England's trip to Pakistan next month. His temporary absence is hardly likely to deny him the prize of a Forte Posthouse weekend for two as the League's leading scorer. He is currently nine goals ahead of East Grinstead's Richard Gibson.

Cannock may have lost the No 1 spot for the first time since November by the time they meet Hounslow. Teddington entertain

Guilford on Hounslow's pitch immediately before them, and victory would put them ahead, if only temporarily.

Luke Hodges comes into the Teddington squad for Jason Laslett, who is on holiday. Teddington will hope to extend their run of wins to nine. Guilford are likely to be without Brett Garrard, their influential England Under-21 captain.

Women face
hard schedule
on final day

Skiing

The last day of the Alpine World Championships in Sestriere tomorrow will be crowded with three medal races and some of the women having to compete twice within few hours.

Organisers said the women's combined downhill, which was called off on Thursday and yesterday due to bad weather, would be held today at noon.

Before that, the regular women's downhill will be held at 9.30am. The men's slalom, at 5pm and 8pm, will then be the final event.

The rescheduling is likely to affect the German women skiers Katja Seizinger and Hilde Gerg most of all. Seizinger is the 1994 Olympic downhill champion and a front-runner for the world title. She is also well placed with Gerg for the combined title.

It is not the first time this season that the women have had two speed races in a day. On 7 December in Val, they held a World Cup super-giant slalom and hours later (the downhill).

THE NATIONS' CHAMPIONSHIP
Regan C
relish I
as hap
hooke

Every Irish side
has been a
handful and I
don't suppose
these boys will
be any different

England rec

Wallace pu

sport



Bradford City's manager has buried his hard-man image and built his First Division side's passing game around Chris Waddle's subtle skills. Phil Shaw met him as he prepared his players to face Sheffield Wednesday tomorrow



Kamara's secret depths

During two decades as a mid-field enforcer, the intensity of Chris Kamara's tackling came to be feared by those who carried the flame for football's finer arts. In his first full season as manager of Bradford City, he is confronting people's preconceptions with similar zeal.

Ten years ago this month, the man now striving to make Bradford a bastion of the beautiful game became the first player ever to face police proceedings for an on-field incident. Kamara received a four-figure fine for breaking an opponent's jaw, and, by his own admission, had run up "a terrible list of bookings and five or six sendings-off" before retiring.

By an unhappy coincidence, the Bradford board recently started legal action against a Huddersfield player. Gordon Watson, making only his third appearance after Kamara bought him from Southampton for a club-record £550,000, had a leg broken in two places in a challenge by Kevin Gray.

Although Kamara was so incensed by the incident that he had to be restrained by his players, he sees no contradiction or hypocrisy in his apparent change from poacher to gamekeeper. There was certainly no macho posturing about the altercation that put him in the dock in his Swindon days. He paid a heavy price, both financially and in terms of his reputation, but that was then and this is now.

If he had built Bradford in his own image as a player, tomorrow's sell-out home tie against Sheffield Wednesday in the FA Cup's fifth round would have been the definitive clash of styles. Instead, it promises to be a purist's delight, with Chris Waddle among those upholding Kamara's improbable principles against David Pleat's side.

The match has added intrigue because Pleat, whose teams are the antithesis of route-one or rough-house football, deemed Waddle surplus to requirements. Last autumn, First Division Bradford took him in at Valley Parade. He remains there after spurning the post of player-manager at West Bromwich, his renaissance providing a stylish symbol of Kamara's conversion.

At least it looks like a U-turn to the outsider. Kamara, whose gentle eloquence and wry humour further belie his image, argues that it is football which has changed, not him. "I've always thought it was a beautiful game and that the ball should be passed around," he says. "I also believe you can create goalmouth excitement without resorting to the long-ball game."

It is as if Kamara has rekindled an adolescent passion. While some regard it as gaucherie, he was not displeased when one newspaper described him as "39 going on 15".



Chris Kamara in his pitch-side office at Valley Parade: 'I spent the best part of 20 years trying to stop people like Chris Waddle from playing'

Photograph: Peter Jay

Yet he offers another, pragmatic, reason for eschewing the cynical methods of his past. "Some of the things I did on the pitch, you couldn't do today because of the rule changes covering things like the tackle from behind," he says, the honesty as brutal as a whack on the shin. "Nowadays you need people who are skilful rather than physical in the English game."

"I spent the best part of 20 years trying to stop people like Chris Waddle from playing. Now I'm convinced that good touch and loads of movement are the way forward."

Bradford's squad reflects his faith in flair (as well as a judicious exploitation of the Bosman ruling while funds went into ground im-

provements). It includes a Dutchman, two Portuguese (one of Brazilian origin), sundry Scandinavians and the pass master who once kept Paul Gascoigne out of the England team, Gordon Cowans. Kamara makes no secret either of his interest in reuniting Waddle with Peter Beardsley in City's daret and amber.

It appears to be a classic case of "do as I say, not as I did". But while the former dockyard apprentice from Mosses was a ball-winner, with all that term implied, he always felt there was a more constructive player trying to get out.

The catalyst proved to be a transfer from Stoke to Leeds in 1990. The bookings dried up, the skill began to show. At 32, Kamara made his de-

büt at the top level as an emergency left-back, subbing Tony Daley without recourse to ruggedness. He went on to enjoy a trouble-free run, never playing the sore thumb among sophisticates like Gordon Strachan and Gary McAllister.

"My only regret is that I didn't play for Howard Wilkinson earlier. I would have achieved more and played even longer if I had. At other clubs I was with, the players were always anxious about money, about making ends meet. So to go somewhere as well organised as Leeds, where almost the only thing you had to worry about was playing on a Saturday, was fantastic."

"Howard was my dream manager, somebody I'd been crying out to

play for. He encouraged me to cut out the reckless challenges - fined me for them - and it worked well for me. He's so meticulous. If anyone was made to be FA technical director, it's him."

From Lou Macari, at Swindon, he learned that managers do not have to court popularity to earn respect. At Sheffield United, Dave Bassett was strong on squad spirit. Serving under Len Lawrence at Middlesbrough and Bradford was equally instructive. "He's got a great knowledge of football but is also incredibly laid-back, which I envy," Kamara says.

Then there was the shrewd strategist who bars Bradford's path to the quarter-finals. "David Pleat proba-

bly did more for me [at Luton] than anyone apart from Howard. He only had to see a player once to work out all their strengths and weaknesses."

Kamara is grateful, none the less, that Pleat saw fit to free Waddle. "Chris should still be playing top-quality football week in, week out. The bigger the stage, the better he is, as he proved in the fourth round at Everton. But he's also been superb at places like Wycombe and Grimsby."

Waddle, a cult figure with supporters, is obviously enjoying his football again. And, as if to prove that Kamara is not the only one breaking new ground, the man Middlesbrough christened "the king of swaying hips" even scored. Wim-

bledon-style, with a far-post header against Huddersfield. At Goodison Park, he embarrassed Neville Southall with a majestic chip from 35 yards.

One theory as to why the bigger clubs ignored Waddle is that they doubted his capacity, in his 37th year, to sustain his impact on a game. It may also be that some managers were afraid to bring in a charismatic figure who might have ended up replacing them.

What if 21st-placed Bradford end up being relegated - surely Waddle's presence offers an instant solution for the chairman? "Of course it could happen, but I can't worry about that," Kamara says. "I have to do what's best for the club."

"But I believe in my ability. I promised my chairman, Geoffrey Richmond, promotion last season when I took over, which we achieved despite starting from mid-table. You must stick by your beliefs. To me, signing someone of Chris's class is never a gamble."

"Results weren't good before Christmas, but I can assure you we won't be in the bottom three at the end of the season. We've been playing the best football this city's ever seen - all that was missing was the firepower, which is why the chairman put up the money for Watson."

Lofty claims. To substantiate them Kamara points to a near doubling of attendances since last season, easily the biggest rise in all four divisions. As proof of their Premiership potential, he cites last May's invasion of Wembley by 30,000 Bradfordians for the play-off final victory over Notts County.

Ending the season in triumph made a welcome change, Kamara explained. As a player with Luton, Middlesbrough and Sheffield United, he was relegated from the top section three years running. "They say that Coventry used to pay clubs to sign me," he says with deadpan delivery.

Mention of Luton's demise reminds Kamara of his return to Elland Road in their colours. Eric Cantona had just scored his first goal for Leeds and the man from York, store TV pressed Lee Chapman, who once played in France and had offered to act as an interpreter, to ask him about it.

"So Chappy turned to Eric and said [slips into Inspector Clouseau accent]: 'Ow duz eet feel to ev scored your first goal?' Not surprisingly, Eric was speechless."

Much as Chris Kamara would love to leave his own manager, Bradford, David Pleat, lost for words, Bradford will not set out to beat Wednesday at any cost. "Football's about winning and I'm a winner, but you also have to set standards and entertain people," he says, a man of conviction in more senses than one.

TEAM NEWS: MAJOR WEEKEND FOOTBALL FIXTURES AND POOLS CHECK

FA CUP

FOURTH ROUND

Blackburn v Coventry

Blackburn will again be without long-term absentees Pearce, Forster, Ripley and Coleman. Ulsterian international defender Yavuz, an £800,000 signing from Dnepropetrovsk, may be called up for his Coventry debut as Breen is cup-tied.

FIFTH ROUND

Birmingham v Wrexham

Birmingham could be without nine players, with former FA Cup winners Bruce, Albion (both hamstringing) and Lupton (knee) all doubtful, while Devlin has a back problem. Definitely out are knee-injury victims Francis and Joe, the suspended Gillingham, Barnett, who has a glandular fever, and the cup-tied pair Forster and O'Connor. Newell has been recalled from his loan spell with West Ham. Hurnes, Ward and Brace all face late fitness tests for Wrexham, so Skinner and teenage striker Morris are added to the squad.

Chesterfield v N Forest

Chesterfield captain Dwyer will undergo a late fitness test on a hamstring strain. Holland is struggling with a groin injury, while Davies, who scored a hat-trick in the last round, is trying to shake off a bout of tonsillitis. Williams is definitely out through suspension. Forest manager Pearce is banned, so Gerrard is likely to return with Phillips moving to left-back.

Leeds v Portsmouth

Bowler (ankle) faces a late fitness test for Leeds. Portsmouth's Swedish striker Svensson also has a test on an arm injury. Whitehead is available following a knee injury.

Man City v Middlesbrough

For City, Bingham, Beagrie and McGoldrick are all fit. Middlesbrough will be without the suspended Emerson, while Moore has a test on an ankle in-

TODAY

3.0 unless stated

FA Cup fourth round

Blackburn v Coventry

FA Cup fifth round

Birmingham v Wrexham

Chesterfield v Nottingham Forest

Leeds v Portsmouth

Middlesbrough v Middlesbrough

Wimbledon v QPR

FA Cup fifth round

Derby v West Ham

Tottenham v Arsenal

Wimbledon v QPR

Wimbledon v QPR

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Nationwide League

First Division

1 Bolton v Sheffield United

2 Charlton v Barnsley

3 Grimsby v Huddersfield

4 Norwich v West Ham

5 Oxford Utd v Oldham

6 Port Vale v Ipswich

7 Southend v Stoke

8 Wolves v Crystal Palace

Second Division

1 Bournemouth v Burnley

2 Bristol Rovers v Luton

3 Crewe v Watford

4 Millwall v Rotherham

5 Notts County v Blackpool

6 Peterborough v Bristol City

7 Plymouth v Barnet

8 Leyton Orient v Gillingham

9 Stockport v Shrewsbury

10 York v Gillingham

Third Division

18 Carlisle v Brighton

19 Darlington v Southport

20 Doncaster v Barnet

21 Luton v Wigan

22 Hartlepool v Torquay

23 Hull City v Brierley

24 Leyton Orient v Cambridge Utd

25 Mansfield v Lincoln

26 Rochdale v Northampton

27 Swanssea v Scarborough

Fourth Division

37 Dover v Bromsgrove

38 Farnborough v Solihull

39 Gillingham v Hednesford

40 Helix v Bath City

41 Kidderminster v Altrincham

42 Macclesfield v Rushden

43 Morecambe v Welling

44 Slough v Northwich

45 Stevenage v Kidderminster

46 Telford v Hayes

47 Woking v Southport

Isle League

1 Aylesbury v Grays

2 Bishop v St Albans

3 Boreham Wood v Hemel Hempstead

4 Enfield v Chertsey

5 Harrow v Watlington

6 Highbury v Dulwich

7 Purfleet v Oxford City

8 St Albans v Dagobert

9 Sutton Utd v St Albans

10 Yeading v Bromley

11 Yeading v Kingstonian

Tenants Scottish Cup

Fourth round

1 Brechin v Raith Rovers

2 Clyde v Kilmarock

3 Falkirk v Dunfermline

4 Motherwell v Hamilton

5 Rangers v East Fife

6 St Johnstone v Forth

7 Stirling Albion v Forth

8 Stirling Albion v Forth

9 Stirling Albion v Forth

10 Stirling Albion v Forth

11 Stirling Albion v Forth

12 Stirling Albion v Forth

13 Stirling Albion v Forth

14 Stirling Albion v Forth

FA Cup fifth round

Blackburn v Coventry

Birmingham v Wrexham

Chesterfield v Nottingham Forest

Leeds v Portsmouth

Middlesbrough v Middlesbrough

Wimbledon v QPR

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Wimbledon v QPR

Pies or players – that's the stark choice Scotland face if they want to produce the likes of Dalglish, Cooper or Law again

Waiting for my daughter's birth is like waiting for a Scotland goal – eagerly anticipated, but anybody's guess when it's going to happen. And she might one day have to choose if she wants to pledge her future to Scotland or England since she has a Scottish dad and English mum.

It's unlikely ever to become an issue. However, this matter of nationality does seem to be growing increasingly blurred around the edges. One wonders, for example, for Andy Caddick feels as he bowls for England in his former home town of Christchurch; whether Matt Le Tissier wishes he'd chosen to personally Gallic fair rather than English graft; whether one-time England schoolboy Ryan Giggs, who pulled out of yet another Welsh friendly this week, regrets choosing the Welsh dragon above the English lion;

whether Mark Crossley, erstwhile pretender to Scotland's goalkeeping jersey who made his debut for Wales this week, is suffering an identity crisis; and whether Neil Sullivan, that surf London goer who was called up by Craig Brown in Estonia, really feels as Scottish as he says he does?

Sullivan's case is the most disturbing. The Wimbledon keeper may not be (as he's admitted) "a haggis-eating, kilt-wearing Bonnie Prince Charlie" but no matter, this is after all the caring 90s when we can even accept dear old Winnie playing for Wales, so it'd be wrong to deny Sullivan his chance.

The worrying thing is that Scotland seem to be following the lead of the Irish and the Welsh in searching for players with tenuous links to the motherland or, in this case, the grandmother land.

It was significant that last Saturday Gordon Durie became the first Scot to score for Rangers this year. It was only five years ago that Leeds were beaten in the European Cup by a Rangers side with a backbone of Scots.

Yet European players now form the nucleus of both Rangers and Celtic. Where once they would have bought Scottish, they now look to Europe, while the best that Scotland has to offer – players such as Paul Lam-

bert and Allan Johnston – move abroad.

Compared to the 70s and early 80s, few venture over Hadrian's Wall. Then, the top sides seemed to be brimming with influential Jocks: Law, Strachan, Buchan and Macari

at Manchester United; Lorimer, Jordan and the Grays at Leeds and Dalglish, Hansen, Soumess, and Nicol at Liverpool.

Currently I can think of only four Scottish players who play a pivotal role in their English sides: Hendry (Blackburn), McAllister (Coventry), Ferguson (Everton) and McGinlay (Bolton). Scotland is not widely considered to be the healthiest breeding grounds for the footballers of the future, although some English clubs still have a strong scouting presence there, notably Coventry and Manchester United. Even the late David Cooper once admitted: "If I was 18 again, I wouldn't stay here. Strength has replaced skill as the most important credential. If you can put your foot on the ball and slow the game down, you stick out a mile."

If that's the case, when will we see the likes of Dalglish, Jordan, Cooper and Law again? According to Craig Brown, Scotland's manager, it will be "a very long time before we get another Dalglish".

Brown refuses to blame the dearth of such players on the structure of the Scottish Premier Division in which clubs play each other at least four times a season so that a player's technique is all but sussed out before he has a chance to mature. He says Scotland's current plight "has more to do with evolution, an accident of birth" and stresses that the Scottish Football Association are committed to developing excellence, with plans to set up a residential centre for the best young players.

Brown's predecessor, Andy Roxburgh, claimed the problem with the development of young talent in

Scotland is that "we still approach football the way we did 100 years ago. For example – biases parks. The west of Scotland is the only place I've ever seen them. Whoever dreamed up crushed red shale as a suitable football surface certainly never asked anyone in the game".

Perhaps the problem is an even more parochial one than that, as David Murray once observed. "A few of us want to discuss super leagues," said the Rangers chairman, "but all the rest can talk about is the price of meat pies." Set against the comment made by Aberdeen's general manager, David Johnson, that "pies are probably the most sacrosanct thing in Scottish football", that's hardly surprising. But it would be nice to think the Scots felt the same way about their players as they do their pies.



ON SATURDAY

Olivia Blair

Big chance for the small clubs

Guy Hodgson on this weekend's round in the most open FA Cup for years

Ah, the heavy beat of anticipation on FA Cup fifth round day. Every club counts three matches to Wembley and a frisson of excitement runs through them. More so this year than for a long time.

The twin towers which began as a desirable but hazy vision in January have become a more defined objective for the surviving clubs this year thanks to the absence of the usual suspects when it comes to making off with the trophy in May.

Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United and Tottenham have won the Cup every year bar two since 1981 and with their removal the temptation to think about tailors checking for the fitting of Wembley suits becomes irresistible. It has been the year of the upset. We are seeing the stirring of the have-nots and never-hads.

Even Manchester City, whose wretched season of chopping and changing managers suddenly has taken an alternative complexion. They meet the Premiership's bottom club Middlesbrough in the fifth round today to the accompaniment of warnings from the police saying they will clamp down on ticket touts. Old hat at Old Trafford, of course, but at Maine Road?

There will be 31,000 to watch the First Division team that lost matches almost as frequently as they discarded name plates on the boss's door until Frank Clark's appointment in December arrested the decline so much so and they go into today's match with a seven-game unbeaten run.

Expectation, fanned by United's defeat at Wimbledon, is rampant in the sky blue side of Manchester which has had Clark dashing for a huge dose of reality. "There's an opportunity because the bigger clubs are out," he said, "but unless we win today the opportunity will have gone. Clubs like Middlesbrough will also have noticed who's left to the competition."

The match of aspiring giants in stricken circumstances would be fascinating anyway but the contest will pit arguably the best two dribblers in Britain. The twinkling feet of Georgi Kinkladze and Juninho seem to be inspired by the prospect of playing at Wembley.

Certainly it has lit Kinkladze's touchpaper and yesterday he was talking about going to the old ground three times this year. "I believe I have chances in the FA Cup, the pro-



Georgi Kinkladze (left) and Juninho, who are crucial to their club's Cup hopes



Photographs: Albert Cooper/David Ashdown

Liverpool link up with Crewe

Liverpool were at pains yesterday to deny that the "alliance" they have formed with Crewe Alexandra was just another word for the formation of the first nursery club in the English game.

Officially, the liaison with the Second Division club is designed to enhance the development of young players and is not linked to recent proposals that lower level sides should become feeder clubs for Premiership big fish.

The alliance was announced 24 hours after Liverpool took Crewe's 23-year-old midfielder Gareth Whalley on trial with a view to a permanent move.

Liverpool will have no shareholding or financial stake in Crewe who are to maintain their autonomy.

A statement issued by Liverpool said: "The alliance was perceived to offer mutual benefits despite the differences in stature, size and likely future development of the two parties."

"Although smaller in all respects, Crewe Alexandra mirrors Liverpool in many ways, with its commitment to professional excellence, an estab-

East Fife going west

has conceded 73 goals, but Bone insists there is little point in him or his players worrying about Brian Laudrup and the other Ibrox stars. "If I thought about the likes of Laudrup, I would have been sleepless for three weeks since the draw," Bone said. "If those guys play to their form, then it could be a long afternoon for us, but we will do our best."

Rangers will be without Paul Gascoigne, whose ankle injury will keep him out for at least another week, and their Chilean striker, Sebastian Rozental.

Alan Sugar

On 20th January 1994 we published an article concerning the delay at that time in the appointment of Terry Venables as England coach. This report may have been understood to suggest that Alan Sugar had sought to cause the delay. Alan Sugar wishes to make it clear that he always believed Terry Venables was the best man for the England job and at no time did he seek to hinder Venables' appointment by threats of legal action or otherwise.

Adams doubtful as Arsenal look to regain lead

NICK HARRIS

Arsenal go into today's north London derby at Tottenham knowing they can't top of the Premiership for the first time since mid-December if they win by two clear goals.

They Adams, kept out of England's World Cup qualifier with Italy on Wednesday by injury, has a 20 per cent chance of playing, according to Arsène Wenger, the Arsenal manager.

The defender faces a late fitness test on the twisted ankle sustained in Arsenal's 1-0 FA Cup defeat by Leeds 11 days ago. Goalkeeper David Seaman, who also missed the game at Wembley, is definitely out.

Tottenham, who lost 3-1 at Highbury in November and have won just three of 12 games since, also have injury problems.

"Any good squad can absorb one or two injuries, but not nine as we had at one point recently," Gerry Francis, the Tottenham manager, said. "To be honest, I would rather Arsenal were still in the FA Cup and we wouldn't have to play them until the end of the season."

In the Nationwide League First Division, Bolton Wanderers hope to extend their nine-point advantage at the top of the

Australian takeover

The greens are very hard to read and you must dig the ball in the fairway. It is an absolute must," said Woods. "Whereas the last two holes that left him sharing ninth place."

Jose Maria Olazabal has still to decide whether he will share his comeback at the Dubai Desert Classic in two weeks' time but he has asked his manager to arrange a visa for him.

He has not played a tournament since September 1995 because of rheumatoid arthritis in both feet, but after treatment from a German sports medicine expert, he has been exercising and practising regularly.

practising for about five or six hours a week right now and I badly need a lot of matches under my belt to get back into the swing of things.

"It's all about concentration with me and today that was pretty good," added James, who highlighted a solid performance with breaks of 46, 55, 43 and 47.

James is the only player to have beaten Stephen Hendry at The Crucible in the 1990s, defeating him 13-11 in the World Championship six years ago.

James steps up a gear

Steve James, a former member of the world top 10 in 24th in the rankings, moved into the last 32 of the International Open in Aberdeen yesterday.

James, registered only his fourth win in eight tournaments this season by defeating Mark Woodhouse 5-3.

Once I was banned from driving just before Christmas, getting the right amount of practice was the only way to stay in the game," James said. "I am only

SPORTING DIGEST

Baseball
NEW YORK (AP) — The Yankees' season began with a bang as they defeated the Boston Red Sox 10-0 in the season opener. The Yankees' ace, Dwight Gooden, pitched a complete game, allowing only one run and striking out 11 batters.

Football
The West Ham striker Steve Jones has joined Charlton for £400,000. West Bromwich Albion have bought the left-back Graham Potter from Southampton for an undisclosed fee, thought to be between £250,000 and £300,000.

Ice hockey
The New York Rangers defeated the Philadelphia Flyers 4-1 in the season opener. The Rangers' star, Mark Messier, scored two goals and assisted on another.

Rugby League
The Bradford Bulls defeated the Wigan Warriors 12-10 in the season opener. The Bulls' star, Ian Hogg, scored two tries.

Rugby Union
The touring British and Irish Lions defeated the South African Springboks 22-10 in the season opener. The Lions' star, Gareth Edwards, scored two tries.

Golf
A British and Irish women's select team will play South Africa in an annual tournament at Letham Golf Club, Scotland, on 4-5 June.

Cricket
Kent have signed Paul Strang, the Zimbabwe leg-spinner, as their overseas player for this summer on a one-year contract as a temporary replacement for Carl Hooper.

Cycling
The Australian team, led by Stephen Hendry, won the World Cup in the 1990s.

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	Spain
	Sal y Mera - Powder on a firm base 100% 12.2 80 400 Cold, sun
	Switzerland
	St. Moritz - Excellent lift power 60% 13.2 60 150 Unsettled
	United States
	Steamboat - Powder snow at all levels 100% 13.2 110 285 Part cloud
	Steamboat - Groomed or packed snow 100% 13.2 110 285 Part cloud

Hard man gone soft

Chris Kamara puts skill before brawn, page 30

sport

Happy hooker

Mark Regan takes on Ireland, page 29

FIVE NATIONS' CHAMPIONSHIP

Rodber must take control for England

CHRIS HEWITT
reports from Dublin

The kitchen-sink theory of rugby pays dividends only when key opponents start washing their hands of all responsibility. If Jack Rowell, the England coach, has spent the last five days warning his players what to expect when they square up to an increasingly positive Irish side in Dublin this afternoon, it is a safe bet that he has concentrated most of his attention on two players who already know the score.

If ever there was a time for Jason Leonard, the Harlequins prop, and Tim Rodber, the Northampton No 3, to stand up and be counted amid the flying crockery, this is it. Together with Martin Johnson, their equally influential comrade in the second row, they have first-hand experience of the Emerald Isle furies and given the fact that Lansdowne Road is virgin territory for two-thirds of today's England line-up, that makes them central to Rowell's strategy.

Leonard's role has been a matter of public debate all week. Rowell asked his pack leader to address the squad when it convened on Tuesday: in much the same way as Will Carling gave a special insight on the psychology of playing the Scots a fortnight back, the long-serving Quins player's conclusive front-row performance in Dublin two years ago gave him added authority in the build-up to the latest Five Nations encounter. Certainly, his individual contest with Nick Popplewell, who means something very similar to the Irish in terms of expertise and know-how, will be of considerable significance.

Yet it is Rodber who needs to deliver the biggest game of all. His most illustrious predecessor in the middle of the England back row, Dean Richards, was largely responsible for the two victories in Ireland this decade – the last 20

minutes he turned in at Lansdowne Road during the Grand Slam campaign of 1991 has a secure place in the annals – and it has not escaped anyone's notice that Rodber's direct rival this afternoon is the man Leicester supporters have christened the "new Deano".

Eric Miller, just 21 but armed with the cool brain and the close-quarter nous of the most battle-hardened veteran, is on such a hot streak that his opponents tend to finish games with first-degree burns. Rather like Richards, he has an uncanny ability to control the dynamics of the most torrid forward exchanges. Unlike Richards, he also possesses a

Five Nations table

	P	W	D	L	Pts
England	1	0	0	41	13
France	1	0	0	32	15
Wales	2	1	0	1	59
Ireland	2	1	0	1	41
Scotland	2	0	0	2	32

Remaining fixtures
Today: Ireland v England (Lansdowne Road); France v Wales (Parc des Princes).
4 March: England v France (Twickenham); Scotland v Ireland (Murrayfield).
15 March: Wales v England (Cardiff Arms Park); France v Scotland (Parc des Princes).

wide game; as Les Cusworth, England's assistant coach and a Leicester man from head to toe, said yesterday: "He really is one hell of a talent."

A serious test for Rodber, then, made all the more difficult by the morale-sapping criticism he has been forced to endure this week. Both Richards and Peter Winterbottom, outstanding England loose forwards of the immediate past, have questioned the wisdom of picking the Northampton captain ahead of Ben Clarke in a revamped back row and since neither man could be fairly described as a rent-a-quote merchant, the barbs will have found their mark.

At least Rowell, who watched Rodber produce the goods here two years ago when, as Eng-

land's blind-side flanker, he took the fight to the Irish with muscular effect, is in no doubt that he has the right man. "Tim gives us control at the back of the scrum, he is strong enough in possession to allow others to play off him and he gives us a very potent option at the line-out, which is essential," the coach said. "The way I see it, we have the right balance."

England are fully aware of the need to grab the game by the scruff of the neck. In Rowell's words, the approach will be to "absorb and impose", but Phil de Glanville, his captain, put it more bluntly this week when he said: "We know all about the Irish in the first 20 minutes, when their endeavour is at its height and the storm is there to be weathered. There is no question of it being anything other than fierce, but equally there is no question of us sitting back and waiting for things to happen. If we don't want to find ourselves points down, we'll have to take our game to them."

De Glanville is convinced that Eric Elwood, the Irish outside-half, will open proceedings with an aerial bombardment aimed not so much at Tim Stimpson, who is a rock under the high ball, but at the more vulnerable wings, Tony Underwood and Jon Sleightholme. "Our back three accept that they face a test, the like of which they will not have encountered before. They've been practising high takes all week, but it's always more difficult to handle this sort of assault in a game situation and it's up to each and every one of us to get back there and support them."

"The whole match will be a massive physical confrontation. The Irish have no frailties in that department – from one to 15, they will threaten us physically – so I am looking for control, discipline and total commitment."

If De Glanville does not receive all that and more from his players, England will undoubtedly be forced to swallow a repeat dose of 1993, when they were blown to all points of the compass by an Irish side that re-defined the meaning of the word "rampant". But the flurry of tries in the final quarter of the match against Scotland eased many of the terrors circulating around an inexperienced England camp and provided the main men do their stuff in the eye of the storm, the kitchen sink should miss its target.

A female punter has wagered £46,000, thought to be the largest amount ever staked on a rugby match, on England defeating Ireland. The same woman successfully staked £18,000 on England beating Scotland a fortnight ago and stands to collect over £15,000 if her side win today at odds of 1-5.

Ashdown honoured in Nikon Press Awards



David Ashdown, the Independent's Chief Sports Photographer, has been highly commended in the Nikon Press Awards. Ashdown was runner-up in the Sports Photographer of the Year category, which was won by David Joiner of the Popperfoto agency. Ashdown's portfolio of five photographs included the above picture of the British high jumper Steve Smith on his way to winning a bronze medal in last summer's Olympic Games in Atlanta.

Emburey praises Croft

Cricket

Robert Croft was told he could have a 10-year Test career after starting once again for England yesterday. The 26-year old Glamorgan off-spinner has been the biggest success story of this winter's campaign in Zimbabwe and New Zealand and has proved he can be the long-term successor to John Emburey.

After watching Croft's 3 for 49 from 24 overs to keep England in contention on the first day of the final Test in Christchurch, Emburey led the appreciation for the Welshman's growing stature.

Emburey, England's assistant coach, played the last of his 64 Tests in 1995 after a 19-year international career. "The ball didn't seam as much as we thought and there wasn't much swing either," he said. "But Croft has bowled better on this tour than I've ever seen him. He's definitely matured and he could be an England spinner for another 10 or 12 years. Most spinners have their best years later in their careers."

"He's got a good loop and he's a bigger spinner of the ball than I was. He also has a good change of pace and flight it well. And, when he's needed to push the ball through a bit quicker such as during the Wellington Test he has not lost his spin or the late dip which are his trademarks."

Croft's tactics against Stephen Fleming, New Zealand's top player, have illustrated just how dependable and effective a bowler he has become after just four Test appearances.

Operating from over the wicket against him, Croft spun the ball just enough and cramped Fleming's style and eventually grabbed the key wicket of the day for England by having him stumped by Alec Stewart.

Fleming said: "I perhaps came down the pitch a little too early and he bled it back a bit. I knew I was out, but at the time I felt we needed to be more aggressive and try to get our total up to around 250. We have to be positive out there because we have to win the game to square the series."

Dominic Cork, however, is still struggling for form despite

making an early breakthrough with the new ball.

Emburey said: "He's lacking rhythm at the moment, but that can come back as quickly as it goes. He is well aware of the areas he needs to improve on, and there are also a couple of little technical things which are on his mind."

"I felt he tried to bowl a bit too quick today, and as a consequence he lost a touch of control. We are all working with him and talking with him, but at the end of the day it is the player himself who has to go out there and perform on the park."

England's management, though admitting they missed the pitch conditions, pronounced themselves happy with New Zealand's first-day total.

Emburey added: "The pitch was very green, and still a bit damp this morning. We have done well bowling first in other games in New Zealand, and we thought we could get among them early on especially after winning so well in the second Test in Wellington. It didn't quite happen, but we stuck at it pretty well."

First day's play, page 28

In Monday's 20-page sports section

"Even the president told me he wanted me to play a big part in the future of South Africa, but I'm not so sure about politics. I'm still just a student at the university of life."

François Pienaar talks to Ian Stafford



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The Eurostar Dictionary of Flying.

Air Pressure

Getting to airport on time

Airline

Queue to check-in

Air Turbulence

Scrambling to disembark

Airsickness

Realising that you should have gone by Eurostar.

Definition of Eurostar:
The high speed passenger train travelling from Waterloo and Ashford, Kent, direct to the centre of Paris or Brussels without any of the hassles of flying. Look us up next time you need to travel there.

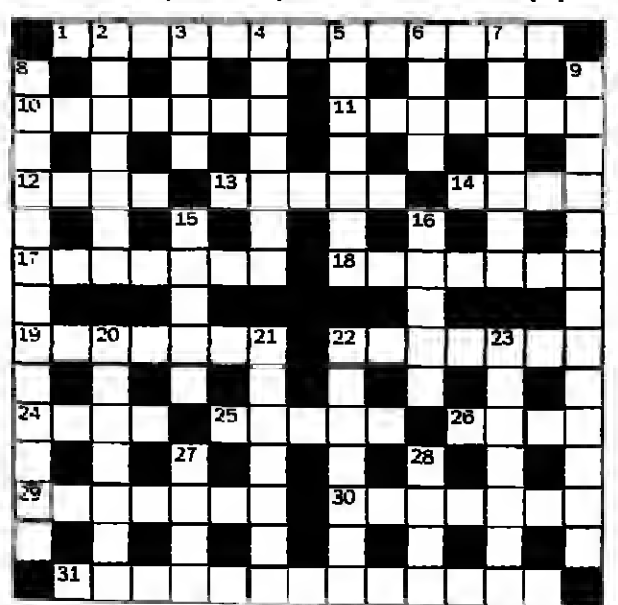


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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3223, Saturday 15 February By Spurious



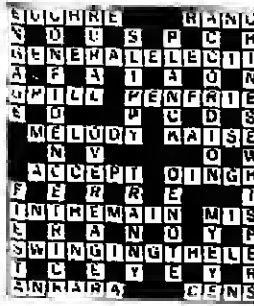
ACROSS

- Helps to avoid cases of mistaken identity (7, 6)
- Chief wanting macho type to accept promotion (1)
- Road works still around from time immemorial (4, 3)
- Flag, one knight's brought back (4)
- River visible from stronghold on height (5)
- In south of France, it's stupid going back to Italy (4)
- Gambling activity involving criminal mob a good deal, on reflection (7)
- Quaint old chapel characteristic of important period (7)
- Rule by the grace of God in Judea, perhaps (7)
- Fluttering in (7)
- A king enters church in Genoa, for instance (4)
- Award-winning broadcast is curious (5)
- Weapon left in bed (4)
- Regeneration some backward British tribe revealed (7)
- Meeting about higher education facility on French island (7)
- They're used to evaluate different tenders (8, 5)

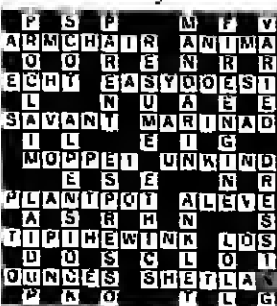
DOWN

- Union leader could identify a potentially dangerous element (7)
- Injured in rugby match for instance (4)
- Party seated in a long, flimsy craft (7)
- First gear (7)
- Young man from London area, by the sound of it (4)
- Showing a certain immature student upset his dad (7)
- Whereby good wishes are conveyed from present-day queen, perhaps? (9, 4)
- Illumination to be found in Soho club? (5, 8)
- Huge crowd in store, reportedly (5)
- Value certain features of new orthodoxy (5)
- Judge given miniaturised instrument on wooden base – a record player (7)
- Ceramic article without merit (7)
- Wrought hrazier is unusual (7)
- Worship initially involving wrinkle oldies? (7)
- Leading parade that's heading off (4)
- Caribbean country about to introduce unemployment benefit (4)

Friday's solution



Last Saturday's solution



The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened up Thursday's crossword puzzle. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 9014, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: John Patrick, London SE19; Philip Nokes, Lyme Regis; Jo Storr, Fleet; Daphne Ripley, Slough; C. Latham, Colyton.

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